ピアノの森 6

Piano no Mori
by Makoto Isshiki

モーニング KC 1438

ピアノの森 6

一色まこと

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The Perfect World of KAI

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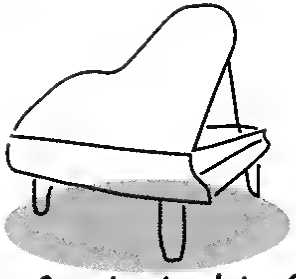
ISSHIKI Makoto



The Perfect World of KAI

6

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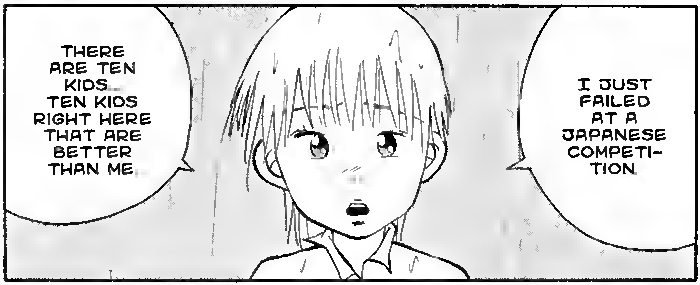
All Characters in this story are fictional; any resemblance is entirely coincidental.

MAY I…
SHOW KAI TO THE REST OF THE WORLD?
EH?
IF… KAI TRULY WANTS TO PLAY THE PIANO…
I'D LIKE TO TAKE HIM IN…
AH.

HE'S HAPPY JUST BEING ABLE TO PLAY THE PIANO IN THE FOREST!
YOU DON'T NEED TO WORRY ABOUT TRAINING HIM, SENSEI. KAI'LL BE FINE!
AHA-HA...
I'M NOT ASKING TO TEACH HIM I'D LIKE TO TAKE HIM
MISS ICHI-NOSE
WOULD YOU GIVE ME CUSTODY OF YOUR SON?

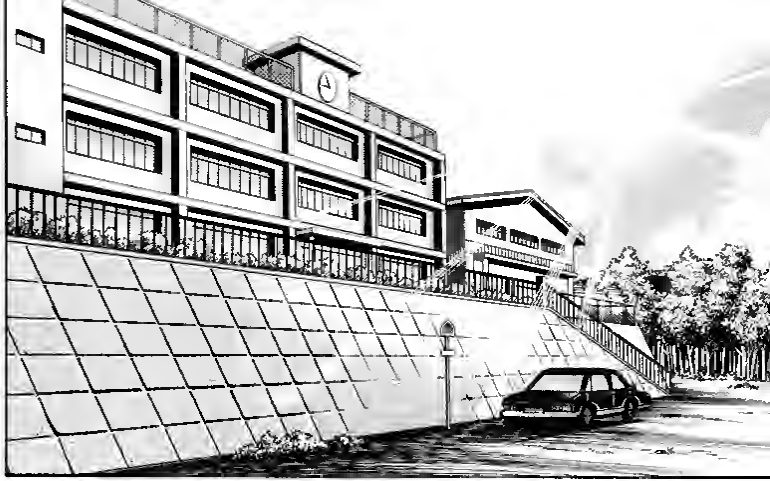
Chapter 41 Teardrop

HOW STUPID ARE YOU, AJINO?


I JUST FAILED AT A JAPANESE COMPETI-TION.
THERE ARE TEN KIDS... TEN KIDS RIGHT HERE THAT ARE BETTER THAN ME.

BACK THEN, WHAT AJINO CALLED 'THE WORLD'...
WHAT COULD I DO SOME-WHERE ELSE.

I CAN PLAY THE PIANO IN THE FOREST ALL I WANT
NOW, THE DEAL'S DONE!
WAS BEYOND ANYTHING THAT REI-CHAN OR I COULD UNDER-STAND...
AND MY COMPETITION WAS OVER...



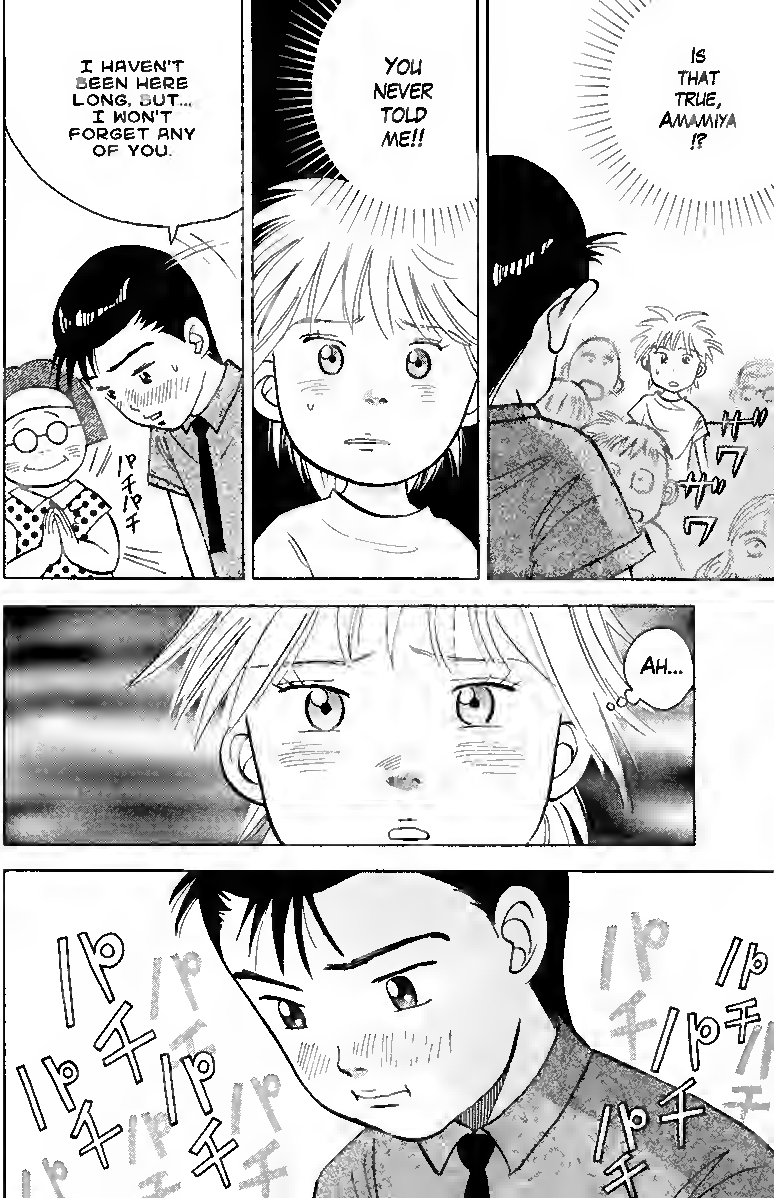
OKAY, ONE MORE ROUND OF APPLAUSE FOR AMA-MIYA-KUN!!
5の3

パチ
パチパチ
パチ
パチ
パチ
パチ
ワァ
ァ

ALL THE ATTENTION MADE HIM UNCOMFORTABLE, SO I FELT BAD FOR HIM...
THE NEXT DAY, THE ONLY THING THE CLASS COULD TALK ABOUT WAS AMAMIYA ADVANCING TO THE FINALS.
パパパチパチパチ
WHAT'S SO GREAT ABOUT WINNING SOME STUPID CONTEST !?
HEY KINPIRA! I HEARD AMAMIYA'S MOM CAME TO SCHOOL TODAY TOO!
YEAH! WE SHOULD CELE-BRATE
OF COURSE AMAMIYA-KUN WOULD PASS, RIGHT?
IF KINPIRA HEARD ABOUT THAT, HE'D TEASE ME FOR TWO YEARS.
GOOD! NO ONE KNOWS THAT I WAS IN THERE TOO AND DIDN'T MAKE THE CUT...
WHAT THE HELL, BAS-TARD!
WE JUST NEED TO FIND YOU A STUPID FATASS CONTEST SO YOU CAN WIN SOMETHING, TOO!!
DON'T BE SO JEAL-OUS, KINPIRA !!

WELL, THAT'S IT FOR THE GOOD NEWS, BUT I ALSO HAVE SOME BAD NEWS FOR EVERYONE
OK, TAKE THE NEWSPAPER OVER TO THE BACK OF THE CLASS
EH?
AMAMIYA-KUN WILL BE GOING BACK TO HIS OLD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN TOKYO

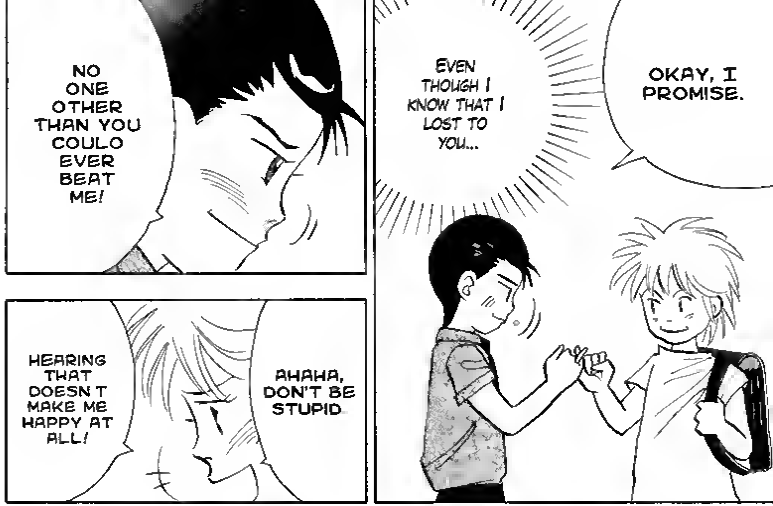
EEEEEEH!?
AH...
OH NO! NO-RIKA'S SHOCK-ED!!
AMAMIYA'S GOING TO LEAVE!?
AMA-MIYA'S TRANSFER-RING?
OF COURSE, HE'LL BE BACK HERE FOR THE COMPETI-TION FINALS
.....

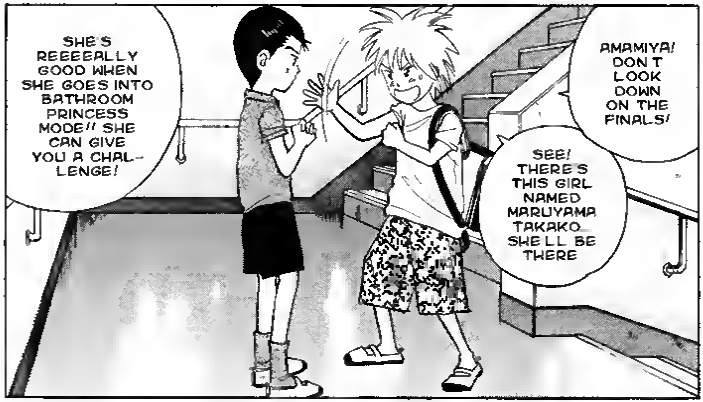

I HAVEN'T BEEN HERE LONG, BUT... I WON'T FORGET ANY OF YOU.
パチパチ
YOU NEVER TOLD ME!!
IS THAT TRUE, AMAMIYA !?
ザワ ザワ
AH...
パチ パチ パチ パチ パチ パチ

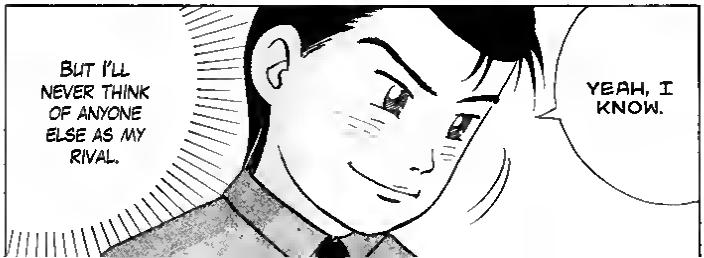
THANK YOU SO MUCH, SENSEI!
NO, IT WAS NOTHING...
I'M JUST SAD TO SEE HIM GO SO SOON...
AAAAH, NORIKA NORIKA CAN'T TAKE IT
...
YES
WE NEVER EXPECTED HIS GRANDMOTHER TO RECOVER SO QUICKLY
KAI-KUN, COME HERE...
YOU'RE NOT SKIPPING THE REST OF THE DAY, ARE YOU!?
HEY, KAI! WHY DO YOU HAVE YOUR BAG!?

I
I DIDN'T MEAN TO NOT TELL YOU ABOUT CHANGING SCHOOLS
I JUST COULDN'T TELL YOU
AND THERE WAS THE COMPETI-
IT WAS JUST SO SUDDEN
YOU'RE GOING TO WIN THE FINALS, RIGHT!?
BE-SIDES THAT
RIGHT, I UNDER-STAND!

AND THEN YOU HAVE TO BECOME NUMBER ONE IN JAPAN!
AND GO TO THE ALL-JAPAN FINALS...
WIN THE REGIONAL FINALS...
PROMISE ME, AMAMIYA!
AH...
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO SHOULD BE NUMBER ONE...
KAI-KUN...
YOU HAVE TO BECOME NUMBER ONE!


NO ONE OTHER THAN YOU COULO EVER BEAT ME!
EVEN THOUGH I KNOW THAT I LOST TO YOU...
OKAY, I PROMISE.
HEARING THAT DOESN T MAKE ME HAPPY AT ALL!
AHAHA, DON'T BE STUPID


SHE'S REEEEALLY GOOD WHEN SHE GOES INTO BATHROOM PRINCESS MODE!! SHE CAN GIVE YOU A CHAL-LENGE!
AMAMIYA! DON T LOOK DOWN ON THE FINALS!
SEE! THERE'S THIS GIRL NAMED MARUYAMA TAKAKO SHE'LL BE THERE

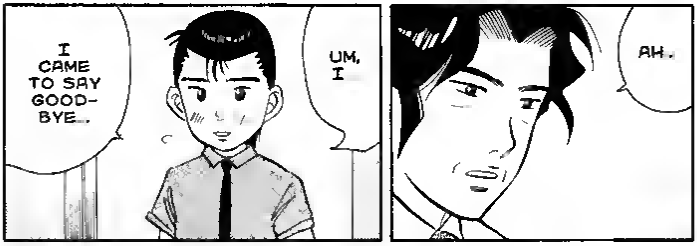

BUT I'LL NEVER THINK OF ANYONE ELSE AS MY RIVAL.
YEAH, I KNOW.

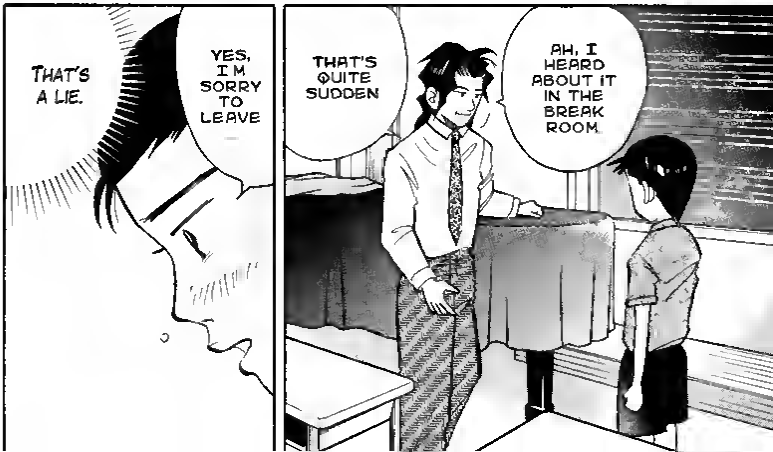
...
SUPER BORED
WITHOUT YOU AROUND
I'LL BE REALLY BORED
I'LL BE BRAGGING ABOUT YOU!
YOU GOTTA DO IT NOW!
RIGHT! IT'S A PROMISE! BEST IN JAPAN!!

GO FOR IT, AMAMIYA!
WORK HARD AND BE THE BEST IN JAPAN!!
YOU CAN DO IT!!
KAI-KUN...

!
MOTHER, YOU CAN GO ON AHEAD
I FORGOT SOMETHING IMPORTANT INSIDE
AJINO-SENSEI ...

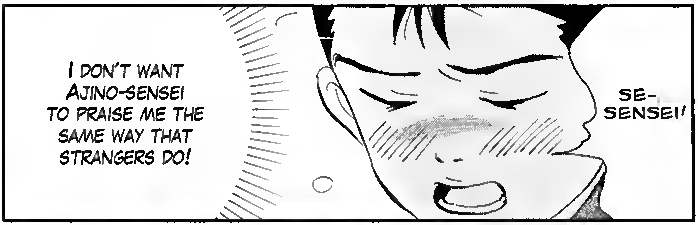
Sign: Music Room

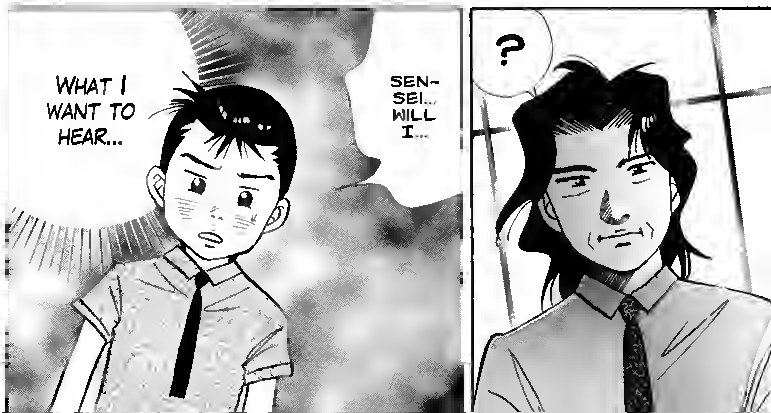


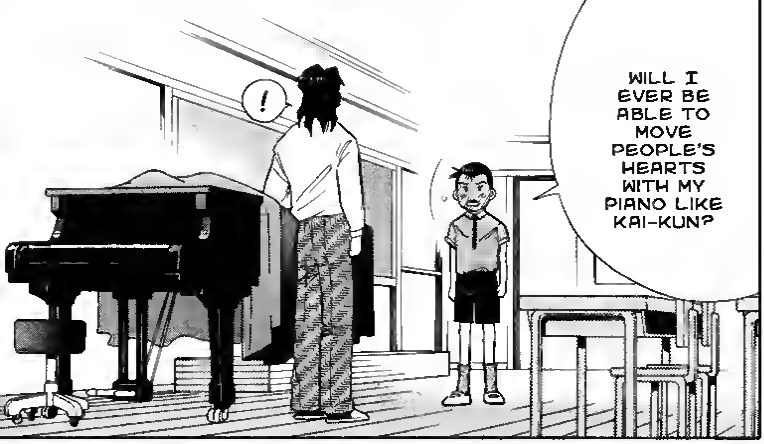


I'M RELIEVED TO BE GOING TO A DIFFERENT SCHOOL.
I'M RELIEVED TO BE GETTING AWAY FROM KAI-KUN
RIGHT NOW, ALL I WANT TO DO IS RUN AWAY FROM THE RIVAL THAT I CAN'T BEAT...
I BET...
ICHI-NOSE WAS PRETTY DE-PRESS-ED
!
YOU WERE THE FIRST PERSON WHO HE EVER MET THAT WAS LIKE HIM.
AH.

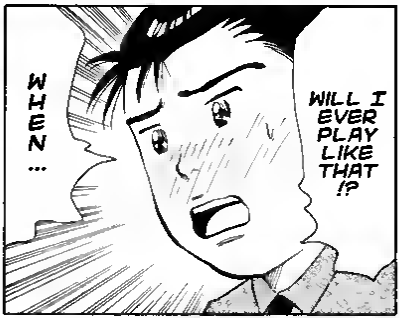
YOU'RE AN IMPRESSIVE YOUNG MAN
YOU DON'T HAVE MANY CHANCES TO HEAR SUCH A TECHNICALLY ACCURATE PERFORMANCE
YOU LET ME HEAR A BRILLIANT PIANO PERFORMANCE LAST NIGHT
AH, YES
Blush

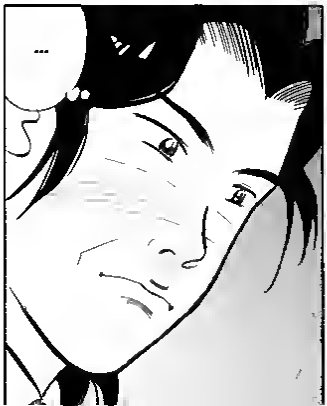

I DON'T WANT AJINO-SENSEI TO PRAISE ME THE SAME WAY THAT STRANGERS DO!
SE-SENSEI!


WHAT I WANT TO HEAR...
SEN-SEI... WILL I...
?


!
WILL I EVER BE ABLE TO MOVE PEOPLE'S HEARTS WITH MY PIANO LIKE KAI-KUN?

...


WHEN ...
WILL I EVER PLAY LIKE THAT !?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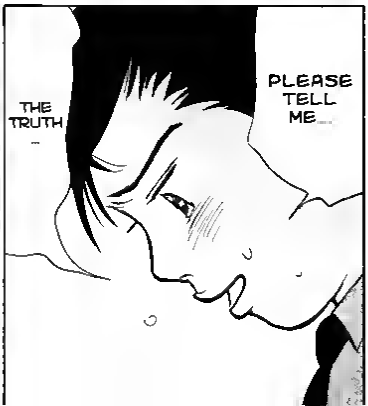

THE TRUTH –
PLEASE TELL ME...

AHAHA-HAHA...
SINCE YOU'RE 'AIMING TO BECOME A PROFES-SIONAL' ...
I'LL TELL YOU WHAT I BELIEVE!
YOU...
NEED TO LOVE YOUR OWN PIANO MORE!
WHEN YOU DO, THE ANSWER WILL COME.
REALLY... IT'S NOT SOMETHING THAT ANYONE ELSE CAN TEACH YOU.

IT WAS A WONDER-FUL PER-FORMANCE
I LOOK FORWARO TO YOUR FUTURE

Work hard, Amamiya
Work hard, Amamiya
Become a shining star ～
KAI, THE PIANO SOUNDS WEIRD
THE SONG S WEIRD...
SHUT UP
I DIDN'T SEE AMAMIYA AGAIN FOR FIVE YEARS...
TEARDROP END

Chapter 42 Downpour

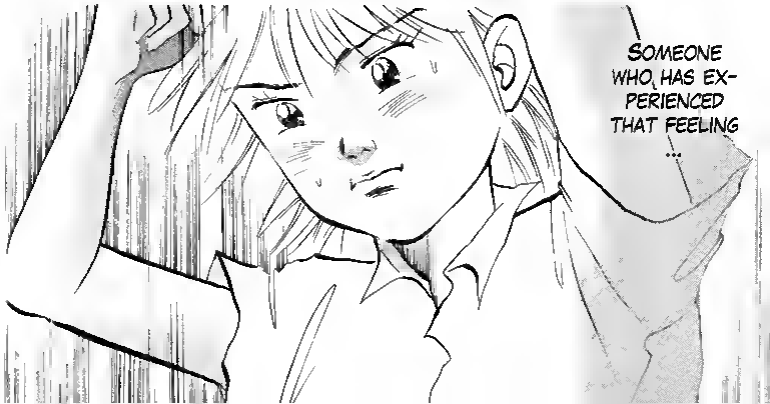
IT'S BEEN A WEEK ALREADY
AND THE BOY STILL HASN'T COME BY EVEN ONCE

AND MAYBE HE JUST WON'T COME BACK
I THOUGHT THAT MAYBE HE WAS SO SHOCKED THAT HE LOST THE COMPETITION THAT HE QUIT THE PIANO
IT LOOKS THAT WAY

WOULD YOU MIND KEEPING THE PIANO READY FOR HIM FOR A WHILE LONGER?
NO...
HA HA
WE'LL BE WELCOME IN THE LESSON ROOM FOREVER AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED
OF COURSE, I'M HAPPY TO!
... ICHINOSE ...
I AGREE
ESPECIALLY AFTER FINALLY GETTING SERIOUS ABOUT MUSIC...
I HOPE HE COMES BACK...

ICHINOSE WILL COME BACK...

SOMEONE WITH THOSE HANDS...


SOMEONE WHO HAS EXPERIENCED THAT FEELING...

Can never escape from the Piano.
The question ...
Is whether or not he's graduated from the Piano in the Forest...
ゴロゴロゴロ
Looks like rain again...

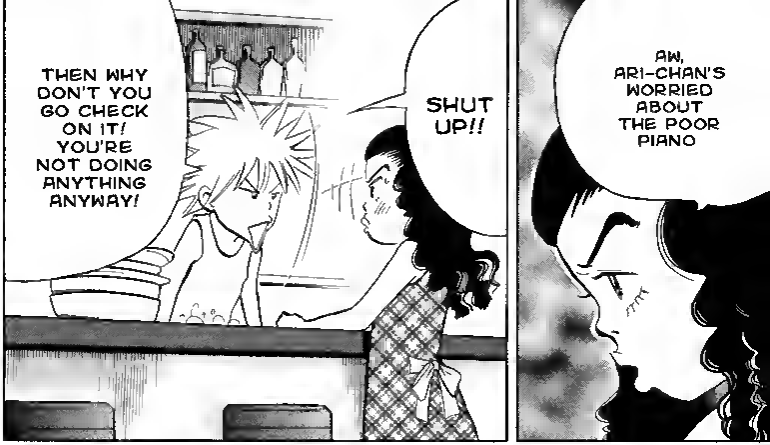
YAH!
ピカ
CRACK
ゴロゴロゴロ
KYAAH!
HMM

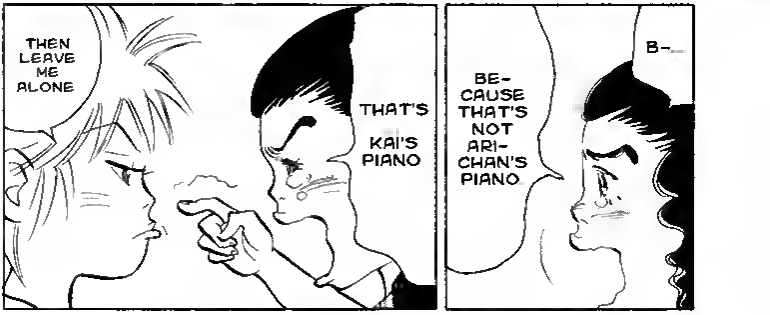
LIGHT-
NING!
LIGHT-
NING!
KAI!
IT
CAME
AGAIN
!!

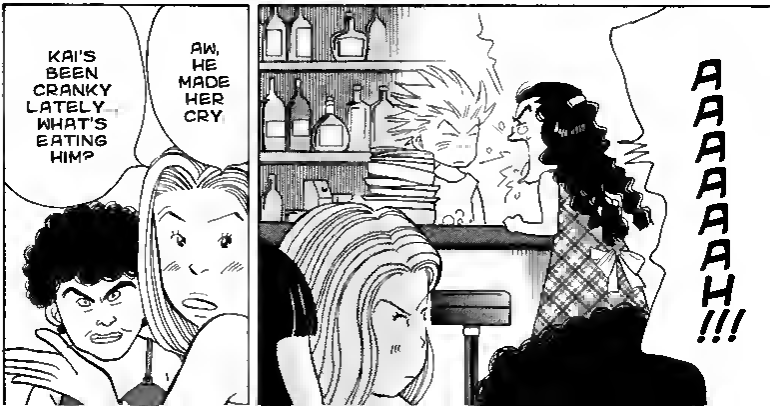
I'LL
CHECK
WHEN
I'M
DONE
I
KNOW

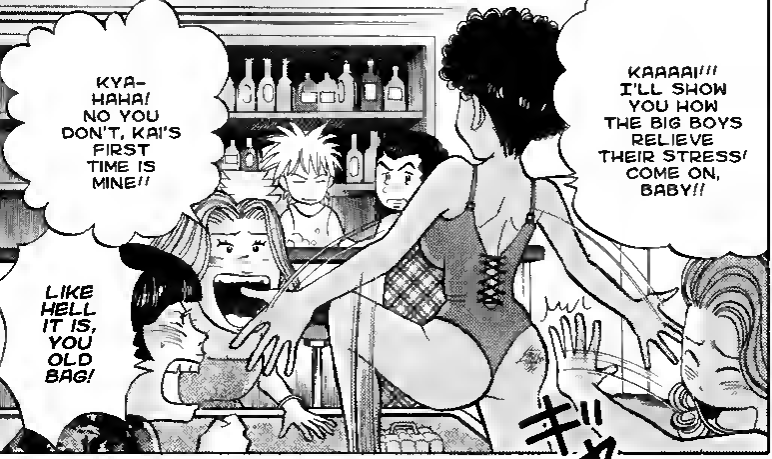
COME
ON!
IT'S
RAINING!
DOWN-
POUR!
IS
THE
PIANO
OK?

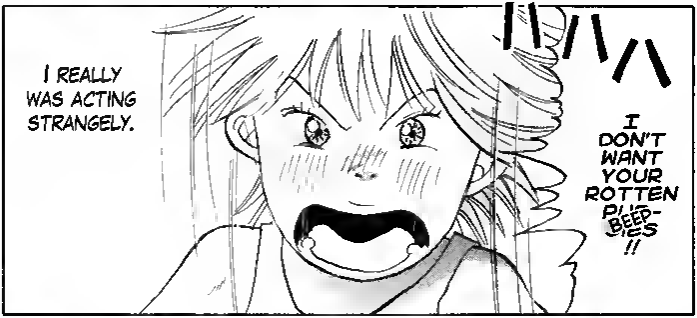
BEFORE,
YOU'D STOP
AND RUN
TO THE
PIANO...
KAI'S
ACTING
WEIRD...
...?
カチャ


THEN WHY DON'T YOU GO CHECK ON IT! YOU'RE NOT DOING ANYTHING ANYWAY!
SHUT UP!!
AW, ARI-CHAN'S WORRIED ABOUT THE POOR PIANO

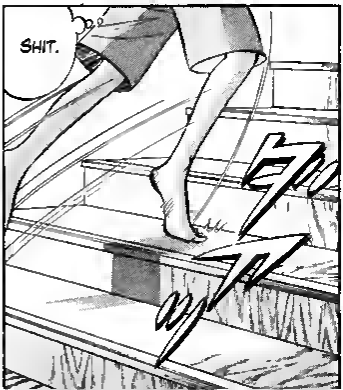

THEN LEAVE ME ALONE
THAT'S KAI'S PIANO
BE-CAUSE THAT'S NOT ARI-CHAN'S PIANO
B-...

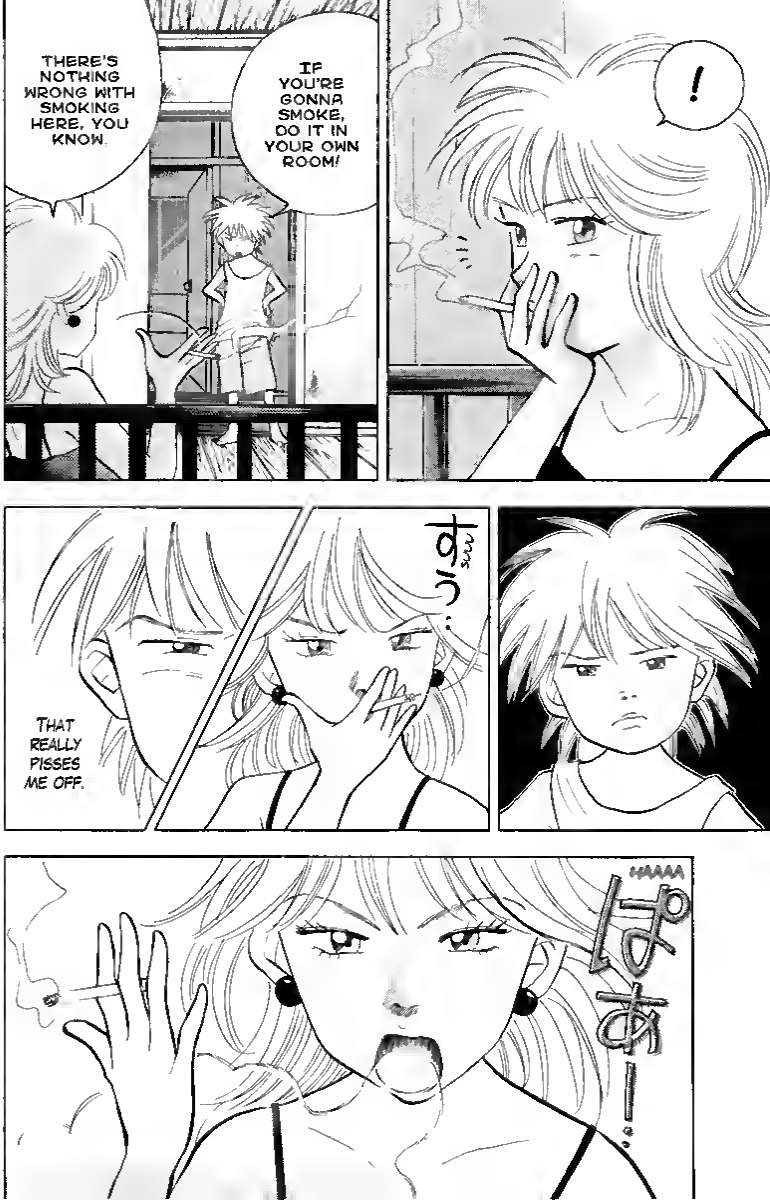

KAI'S BEEN CRANKY LATELY... WHAT'S EATING HIM?
AW, HE MADE HER CRY
AAAAAAH!!!


KYA-HAHA! NO YOU DON'T, KAI'S FIRST TIME IS MINE!!
KAAAA!!! I'LL SHOW YOU HOW THE BIG BOYS RELIEVE THEIR STRESS! COME ON, BABY!!
LIKE HELL IT IS, YOU OLD BAG!
ギャハハ


I REALLY WAS ACTING STRANGELY.
I DON'T WANT YOUR ROTTEN PI-BEEP-ES!!

...
I BLEW UP AT THE SMALLEST THINGS...

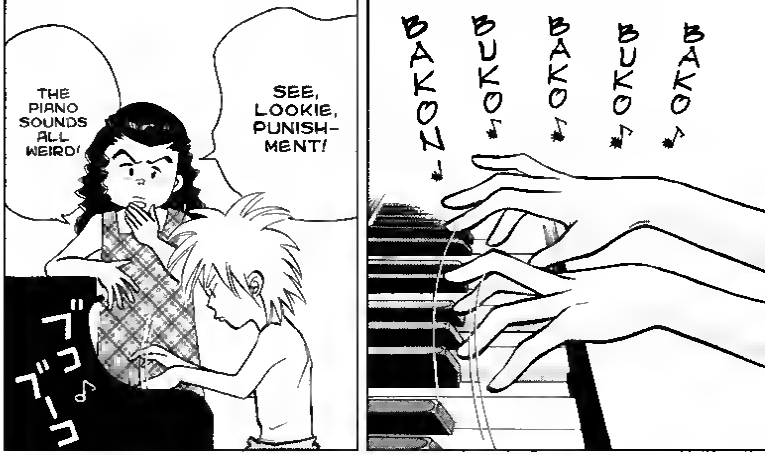

SHIT.

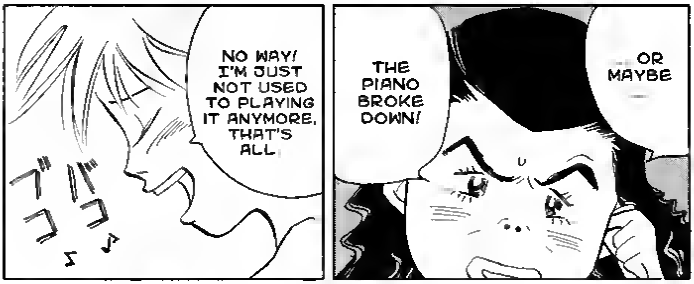

THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH SMOKING HERE, YOU KNOW.
IF YOU'RE GONNA SMOKE, DO IT IN YOUR OWN ROOM!
!
THAT REALLY PISSES ME OFF.
suu
haaaa
ha ah!

Because she doesn't want the coat Ajino lent her before the contest...
Rei-chan doesn't smoke in her own room...
To get smelly with cigarette smoke...
Wah! Hey! Don't bring it in here!!
Just return the damn thing!!

YOU DON'T NEED TO WORRY ABOUT TOBACCO, YOU KNOW!!
IT ALREADY HAS THE SHITTY SMELL OF THE EDGE OF THE FOREST IN IT!!
YEAH, WHATEVER YOU SAY, LITTLE MAN.
LATELY YOU'VE BEEN REALLY
ACK!
HEY, KAI!!

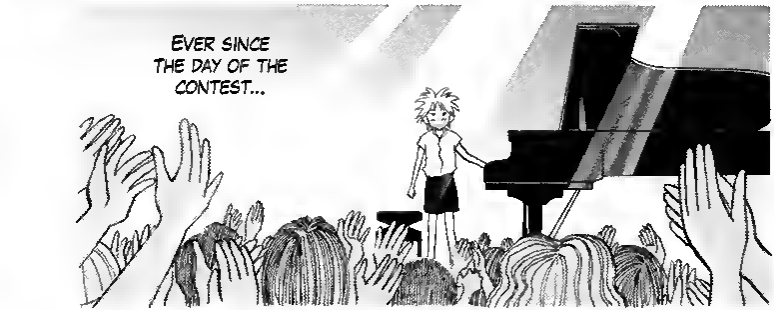
AWWWW...
THE PIANO'S ALL SOGGY.
I TOLD YOU TO COME WHEN IT RAINED.
IT DIDN'T HAVE THE PLASTIC SHEET ON TODAY.
THE TREES STOP THE RAIN, BUT NOT ALL OF IT...
STOP TELLING ME WHAT I AL-READY KNOW AND HELP ME.
ジャ

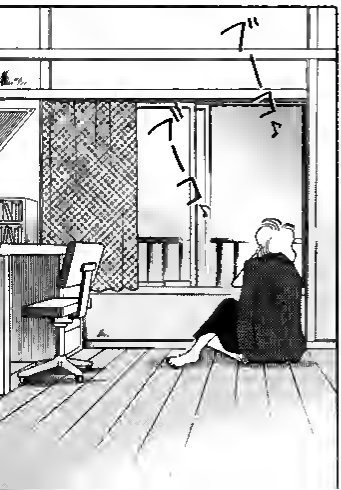

THE PIANO SOUNDS ALL WEIRD!
SEE, LOOKIE, PUNISH-MENT!
ブコ♪ブーコ
BAKO♪
BUKO♪
BAKO♪
BUKO♪
BAKON♪

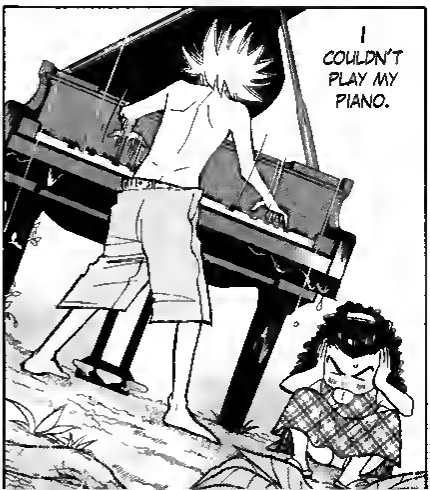

NO WAY! I'M JUST NOT USED TO PLAYING IT ANYMORE, THAT'S ALL
ブコ♪
THE PIANO BROKE DOWN!
OR MAYBE

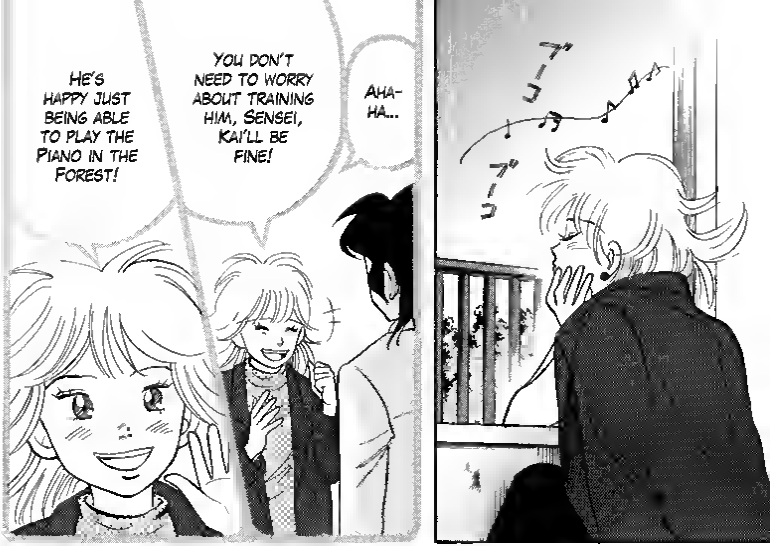
I KNEW THAT MUCH WITHOUT HAVING TO HEAR IT FROM SOMEONE ELSE.
THE PIANO WAS DYING.

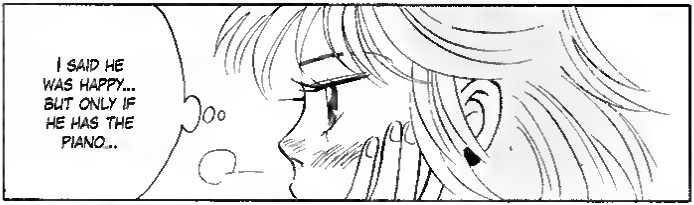
WAS BECAUSE I COULDN'T PLAY THE PIANO ANYMORE.
MY ANNOYANCE, MY ANGER...

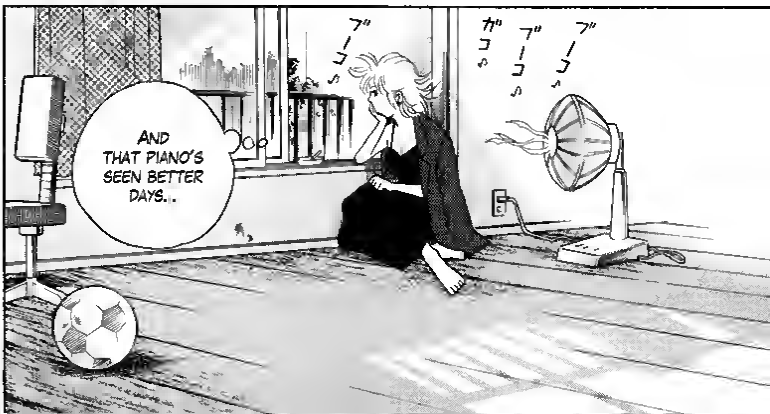

EVER SINCE THE DAY OF THE CONTEST...


ブーー


I COULDN'T PLAY MY PIANO.

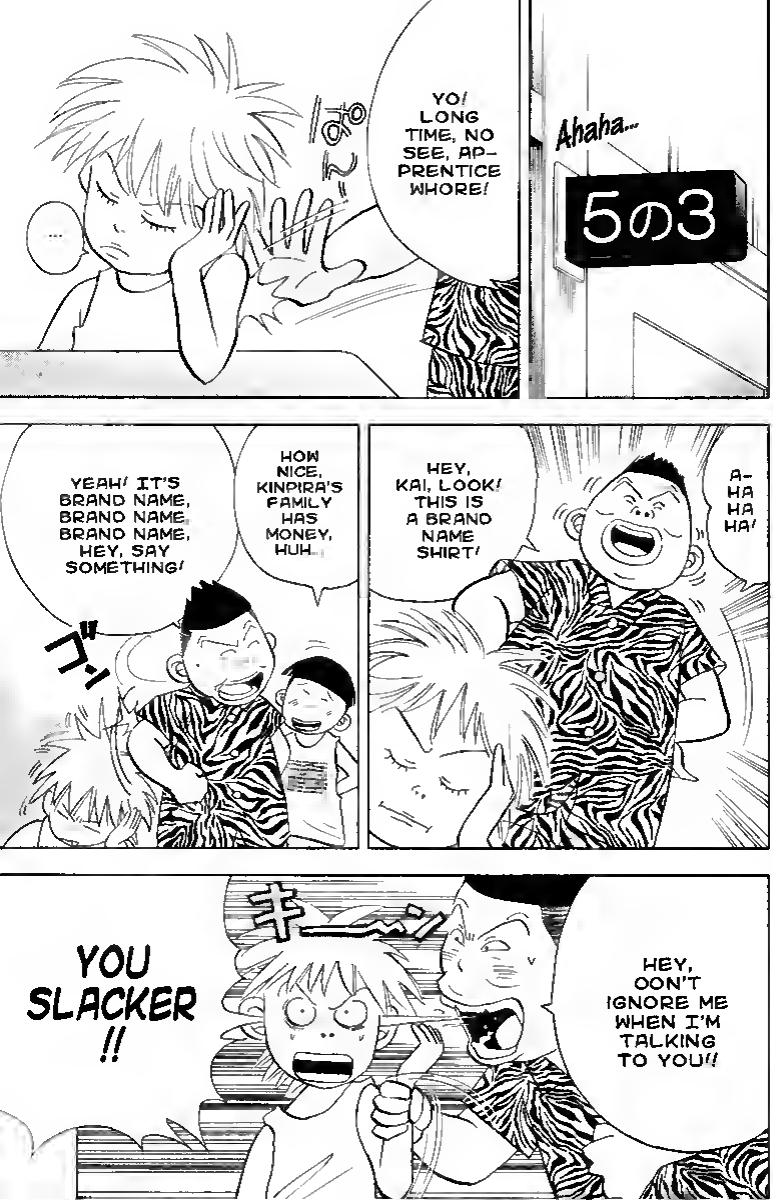

HE'S HAPPY JUST BEING ABLE TO PLAY THE PIANO IN THE FOREST!
YOU DON'T NEED TO WORRY ABOUT TRAINING HIM, SENSEI, KAI'LL BE FINE!
AHA-HA...
ブーブ
ブーブ


I SAID HE WAS HAPPY... BUT ONLY IF HE HAS THE PIANO..


AND THAT PIANO'S SEEN BETTER DAYS..
ブーブ♪
ブーブ♪
ガコ♪
ブーブ♪

I RUBBED AND I CLEANED...
STILL, DAY AFTER DAY...
I WAS KIND TO IT...
THAT'S RIGHT!
STUPID THING!
I WAS MEAN TO IT...
BUT THE PIANO NEVER RESPONDED TO ME...

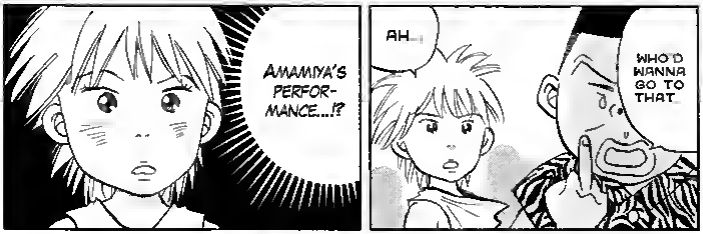
YOU WERE ALWAYS MY MAGICAL PIANO...
BUT NOW YOU'RE JUST A BROKEN PIANO.
MY ANGER WAS AT THE BOILING POINT.

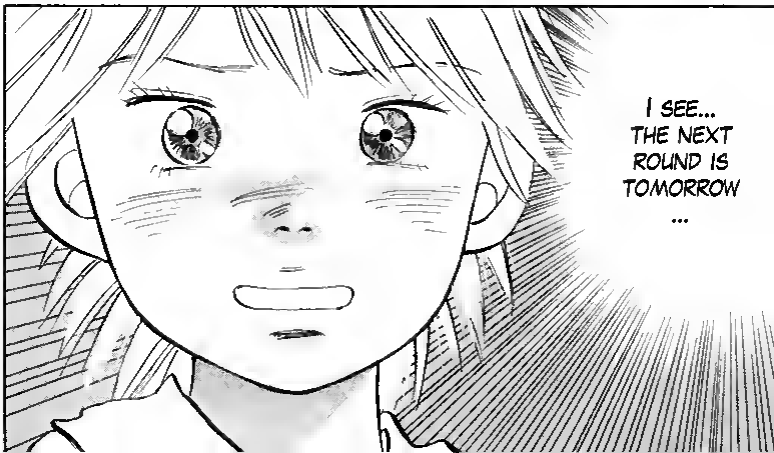

Ahaha...
5の3
YO! LONG TIME, NO SEE, APPRENTICE WHORE!
A-HA HA HA!
HEY, KAI, LOOK! THIS IS A BRAND NAME SHIRT!
HOW NICE, KINPIRA'S FAMILY HAS MONEY, HUH...
YEAH! IT'S BRAND NAME, BRAND NAME, BRAND NAME, HEY, SAY SOMETHING!
YOU SLACKER !!
HEY, DON'T IGNORE ME WHEN I'M TALKING TO YOU!!

DI-...
Dick-shaped...
SEEING YOUR DICK-SHAPED HEAD MAKES ME EMBARRASSED FOR YOU
SHUT UP, KINPIRA!
WH-, WHAT ?
AH!
SEE? YOUR DICK FLUTTERS AROUND A LOT, RIGHT. IT'S APPROPRIATE!
YOUR NICKNAME IS KINPIRA, BUT MAYBE WE SHOULD CHANGE IT TO CHINPIRA INSTEAD?
Note: Chinko = penis 'pira pira' is a flapping sound
AND WHAT'S WITH THE PI PI PI? YOU TRYING TO BE A BIRD?
LIKE I'D EVER LOOK AT THAT!
YOU YOU SAW IT!? PI PI PI PI PIRA PIRA !?
WHAT DID YOU SAY!?

キャー
WAH, OH NO! KIN-PIRA'S GONE CRAZY!
HEY, STOP IT, KAI!
IS HE GONNA TRANSFORM? HEY!! DO WE FINALLY GET TO SEE HIS TRUE FORM!?
GAA !!
パパパ
NOW, NOW, NOW!
EVERY-ONE! PAY ATTEN-TION!!

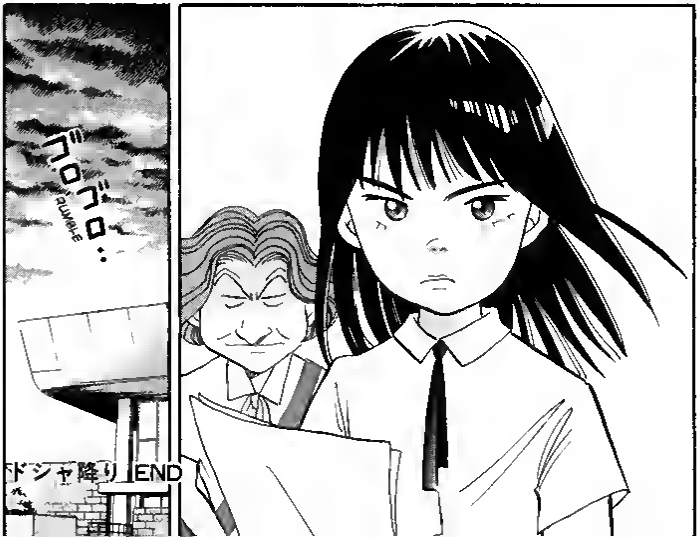
I JUST HEARD FROM THE PRINCIPAL, AND ANYONE WHO WANTS TO CAN COME AND WATCH!!
ON SUNDAY, SO TOMORROW, AMAMIYA-KUN WILL BE PLAYING IN THE FINALS OF HIS PIANO COMPETITION!!
ワアー


AMAMIYA'S PERFORMANCE...!?
AH...
WHO'D WANNA GO TO THAT...


I SEE... THE NEXT ROUND IS TOMORROW ...

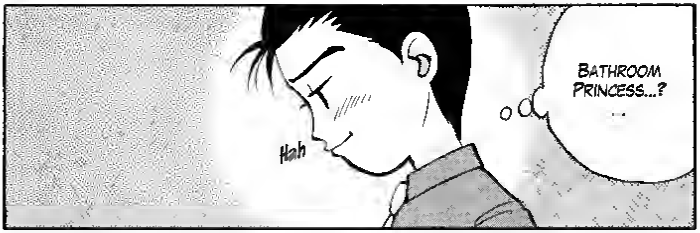
第56回 全日本学生ピアノコンクール 中部南地区 本選

[56th Annual All Japan Piano Competition]
[Chubu Regional FINALS]

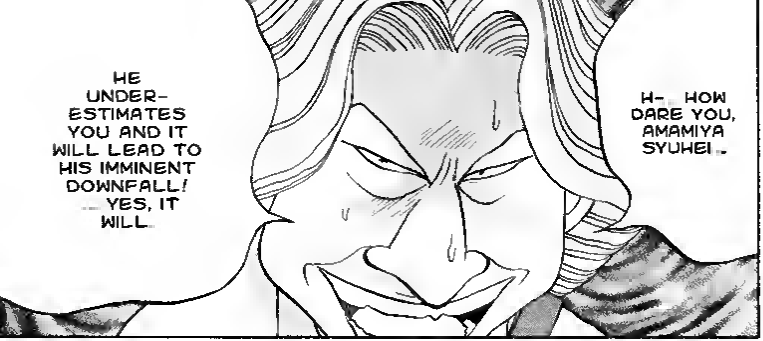

ゴロゴロ・・
RUMBLE
ドシャ降り END

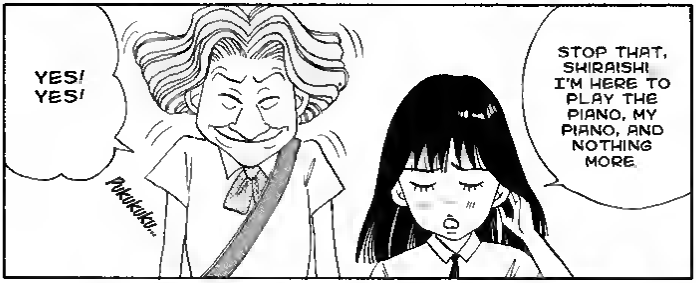
AH...
I'M PRETTY SURE THAT GIRL IS...
MARU-YAMA TAKAKO.

SHE'S REEEEALLY GOOD WHEN SHE GOES INTO BATHROOM PRINCESS MODE!! SHE CAN GIVE YOU A CHALLENGE!
SEE! THERE'S THIS GIRL NAMED MARUYAMA TAKAKO... SHE'LL BE THERE
THAT'S THE GIRL THAT KAI-KUN TOLD ME ABOUT...


Hah
BATHROOM PRINCESS...?
...

I... SHIRAISHI SEE THAT LAUGH AS NOTHING SHORT OF A SLIGHT TO YOU, TAKAKO OJOU-SAMA.
JUST NOW AMAMIYA JUNIOR... SMIRKED, DIDN'T HE?
TAKAKO-SAMA...


H- HOW DARE YOU, AMAMIYA SYUHEI...
HE UNDER-ESTIMATES YOU AND IT WILL LEAD TO HIS IMMINENT DOWNFALL! ...YES, IT WILL...


STOP THAT, SHIRAISHI. I'M HERE TO PLAY THE PIANO, MY PIANO, AND NOTHING MORE.
YES! YES!
Pukukuku...

I UNDER-STAND.
BUT ACCORDING TO MY MOST RECENT DATA... WHEN PUT UP AGAINST HIM...
YOUR CHANCES OF BEATING THE AMA-MIYA BOY ARE 50% AT BEST...
DAMN IT ALL... IF HE WASN'T HERE... WE... WE'D WIN FOR SURE!
PI
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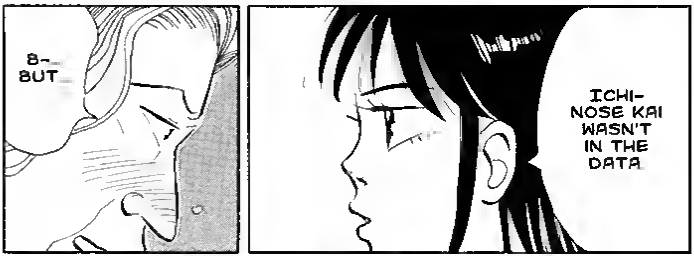
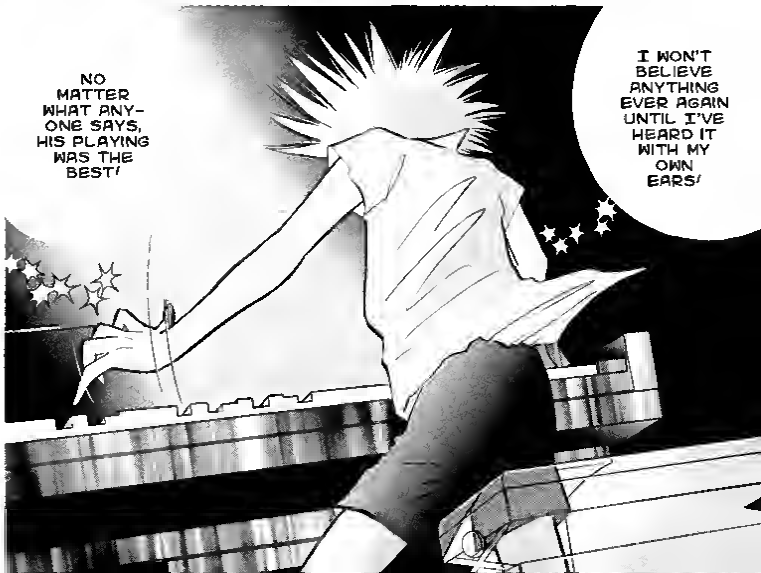
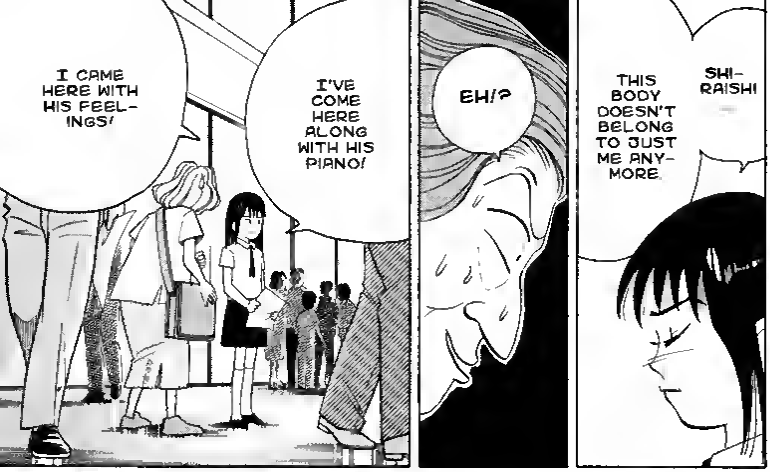
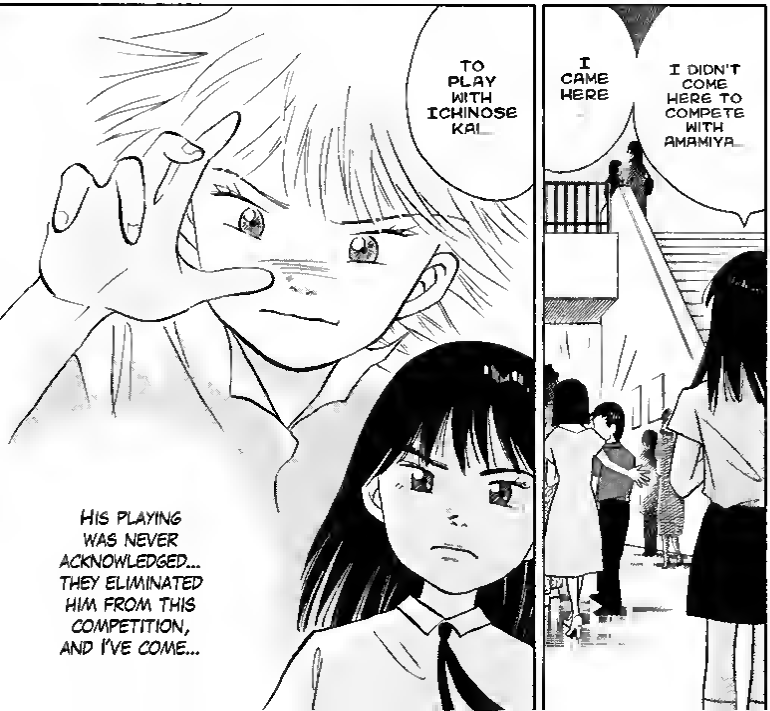
PI

WENDY WASN'T IN THE DATA AT ALL!
DID YOU FORGET, SHIRAI-SHI ?
THE DATA IS WORTH-LESS


B-- BUT...
ICHI-NOSE KAI WASN'T IN THE DATA


NO MATTER WHAT ANY-ONE SAYS, HIS PLAYING WAS THE BEST!
I WON'T BELIEVE ANYTHING EVER AGAIN UNTIL I'VE HEARD IT WITH MY OWN EARS!


I CAME HERE WITH HIS FEELINGS!
I'VE COME HERE ALONG WITH HIS PIANO!
EH!?
THIS BODY DOESN'T BELONG TO JUST ME ANYMORE.
SHIRAISHI

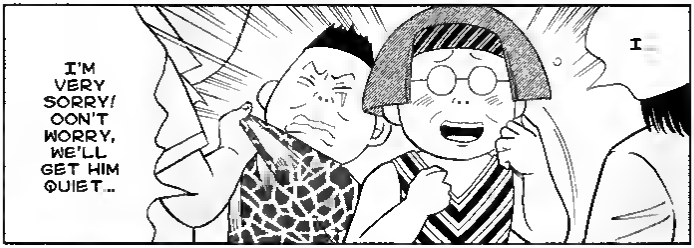

TO PLAY WITH ICHINOSE KAI...
I CAME HERE
I DIDN'T COME HERE TO COMPETE WITH AMAMIYA...
HIS PLAYING WAS NEVER ACKNOWLEDGED... THEY ELIMINATED HIM FROM THIS COMPETITION, AND I'VE COME...

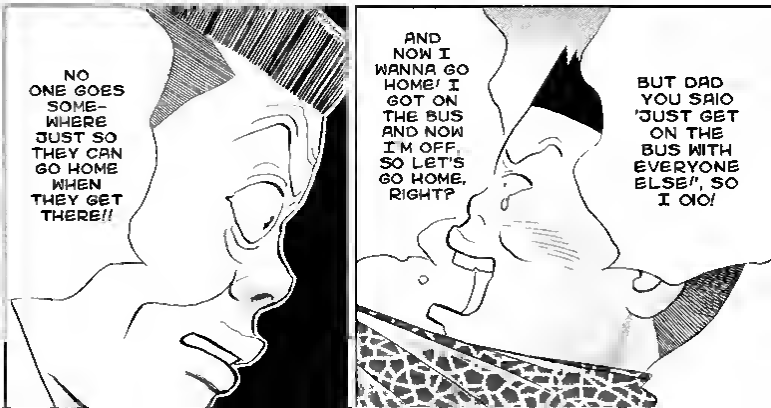
TO PROVE THEM WRONG!!
全日本学生ピアノコンクール
中部南地区
本選
Chapter 43
Absence

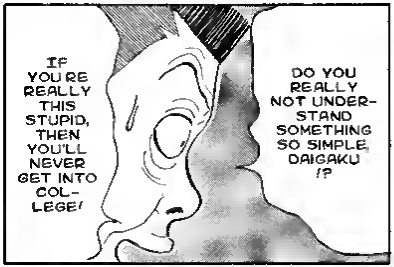
NONO-MURA HANAYO-SENSEI!!
OUR HEAD JUDGE...
パチパチ
...AND NOW, TO BEGIN THIS NEXT ROUND OF COMPETITION..
ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE OUR HIGHLY ESTEEMED PANEL OF JUDGES.
パチパチ
HEY, SHIBA-CHAN
WHAT DO YOU THINK WILL HAPPEN ?
IS IT A LOCK THAT AMAMIYA SYUHEI WILL WIN?

YOU'VE REALLY MATURED SHIBA-CHAN.
HN! I AGREE!
AS LONG AS THE JUDGES SCORE BY THE RULE-BOOK...
...IT SEEMS MOST LIKELY.
I DO NOT LIKE THIS MAN.
AHAHA... SO YOU CAN TEACH AN OLD DOG NEW TRICKS
WOW... SO SOMEONE ACTUALLY BROUGHT A KIO THAT DOESN'T WANNA BE HERE...
LEMME GO~
DAMN IT~

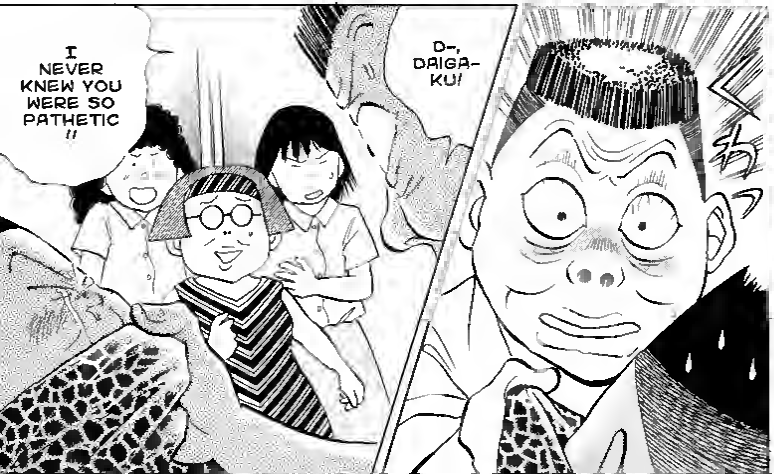
THE PERFORMANCES WILL START SOON, PLEASE BE QUIET!
IF YOU CAN'T... THEN PLEASE LEAVE THE AUDITORIUM


I...
I'M VERY SORRY! DON'T WORRY, WE'LL GET HIM QUIET..

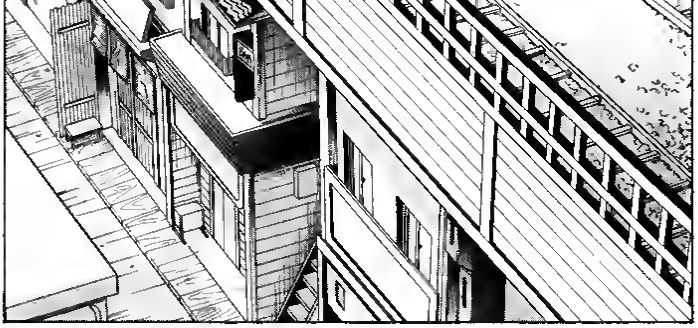

BUT DAD YOU SAID 'JUST GET ON THE BUS WITH EVERYONE ELSE!', SO I DID!
AND NOW I WANNA GO HOME! I GOT ON THE BUS AND NOW I'M OFF, SO LET'S GO HOME, RIGHT?
NO ONE GOES SOMEWHERE JUST SO THEY CAN GO HOME WHEN THEY GET THERE!!



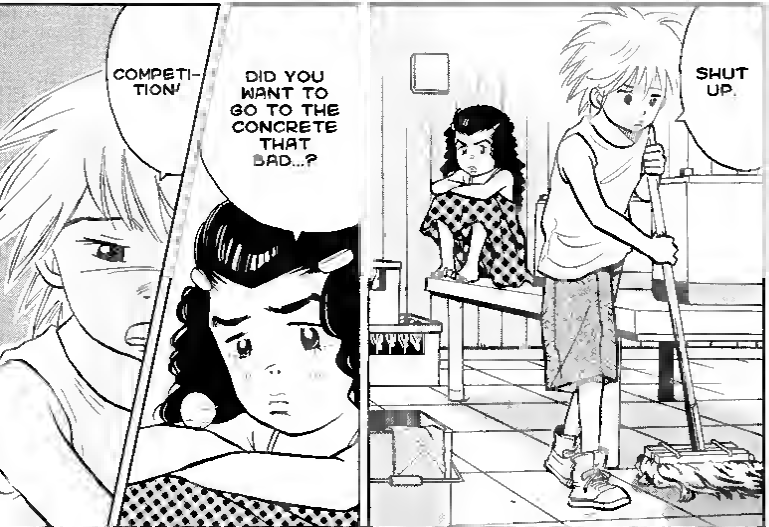
Note: Kinpira's real name is Kaneshira Daigaku. And Daigaku means college.



KAI'S NOT IN THERE!
IT'S NOT ALL OF THEM!
THEY'RE ALL SITTING QUIETLY SO THEY CAN ROOT FOR YOUR FRIENO
YOUR ENTIRE CLASS IS IN THERE
DAMN YOU, KAI!
HIS FAMILY'S TOO POOR, SO HE COULON'T LEAVE!
EEP!
コス
I WISH I WAS POOR-
!!



THE MORNING LADY...
GOT REALLY MAD, HUH...


COMPETITION!
DID YOU WANT TO GO TO THE CONCRETE THAT BAD...?
SHUT UP.

IT'S NOT LIKE I'D BE ABLE TO PLAY THE PIANO...
AND WHEN I THINK ABOUT IT...
I MEAN, I GAVE UP IN THE END.
AND NOT REALLY.
YOU'VE GOT TO DO WORK OVER HERE, AND OVER THERE...
KAI DOESN'T HAVE ANY FREE TIME, HUH.
IT'S WHEN YOU GET UP IN FRONT OF A LOT OF PEOPLE AND PLAY THE PIANO... BUT...
I DOUBT YOU'D REALLY UNDER-STAND, ARISA.
HAHA...
SO WHAT'S A COM-PETI-TION?

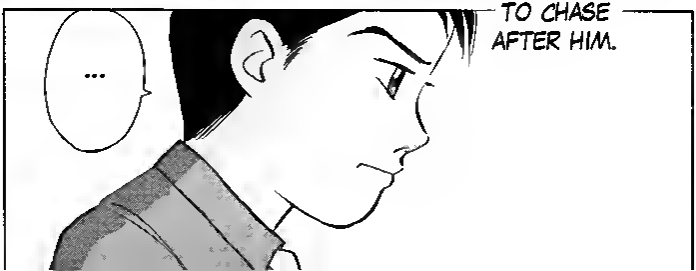
IT FEELS REALLY GOOD
パチパチパチパチパチパチ
パチパチパチパチパチパチ
…
パチパチパチ
パチパチパチ

...
AND THAT WAS PERFORMER NUMBER 3.
...
3
パチパチ
パチパチ
パチパチ
パチパチ
パチパチ
THAT WAS TERRIBLE
WHO KNOWS?
WHAT WAS THAT? WHAT WAS SHE THINKING?
AND NOW, NUMBER 4...
...
THESE KIDS SHOULD NEVER HAVE ADVANCED PAST THE PRELIMINARIES.
WHAT IS ALL THIS?

SUZUKI KYOUKO-SAN WILL PERFORM
WHAT IS THIS? HER TOO?
WH...
BUT ALL OF THEM SHOULD BE FAMILIAR WITH THE SCORE...
SHE'S RUSH-ING?

THE ONE YOU TOOK A LIKING TO IN THE PRELIMINARIES/ NUMBER 37, ICHINOSE KAI!
I'M TALKING ABOUT ICHINOSE KAI
EH?
IT LOOKS LIKE THEY'RE ALL TRYING A BIT TOO HARD TO CATCH UP, HUH
I SEE...
AH...
ONCE YOU'VE HEARD HIS PIANO...
I'M SURE EVERYONE'S THE SAME...
TH-.. THAT'S IT...

IT'S AS IF HE'S PUT YOU UNDER HIS SPELL...
AND YOU HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO CHASE AFTER HIM.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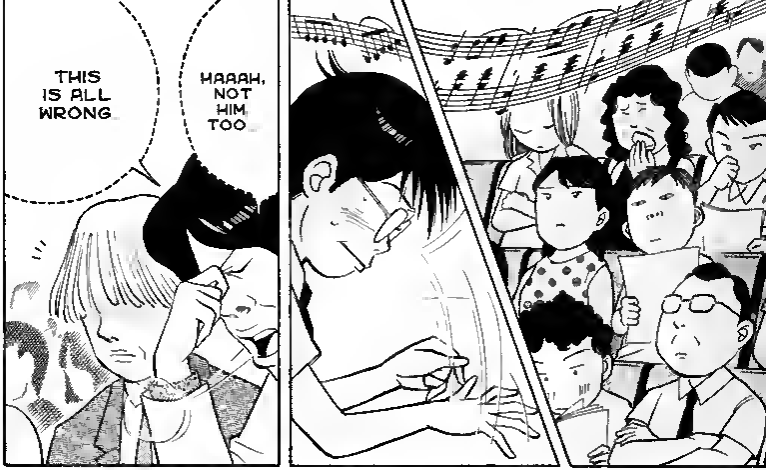
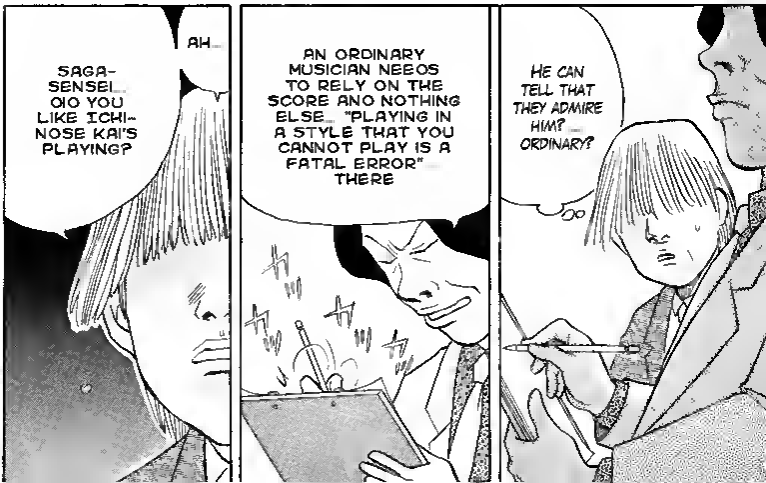

THIS IS ALL WRONG
HAAAH, NOT HIM TOO

BUT AN ORDINARY MUSICIAN COULD NEVER SUCCESS-FULLY IMITATE HIM
FUUUH... I UNDER-STAND WHY THEY ADMIRE HIS SOUND...


AH...
SAGA-SENSEI... DID YOU LIKE ICHI-NOSE KAI'S PLAYING?
AN ORDINARY MUSICIAN NEEDS TO RELY ON THE SCORE AND NOTHING ELSE... "PLAYING IN A STYLE THAT YOU CANNOT PLAY IS A FATAL ERROR" THERE
HE CAN TELL THAT THEY ADMIRE HIM? ... ORDINARY?

THE BOY'S A GENIUS.
WHETHER I LIKED HIM OR NOT IS IRREL-EVANT.
EH?

EVEN IF I'D BACKED YOU UP, THE RESULT WOULD HAVE BEEN THE SAME.
WHAT? THAT'S A RUDE WAY TO SAY IT
I THOUGHT THAT THE SOONER THE COMMITTEE CHOSE SOMEONE ELSE, THE MORE PEACEFUL IT WOULD BE...
WELL...
YOU RECOGNIZED HIS TALENT, BUT STILL FAILED HIM?
TH-... THEN BACK AT THE PRE-LIMS...

HE'S A ONCE IN A DECADE MAYBE ONCE IN TWO DECADES PRODIGY.
THAT'S RIDICU-LOUS.
THA
BUT A PRODIGY CAN BECOME EITHER AN ANGEL OR A DEMON.
I'M NOT GOING TO TELL YOU THAT YOU'RE WRONG.
SHIBA-CHAN.
IT'S BEST THAT THEY NOT ASSOCIATE WITH HUMANS.

BUT DO PLEASE BE CAREFUL!
YOU'RE A WONDERFUL PIANO INSTRUCTOR...
BUT IN THE END, YOU'RE ONLY HUMAN
AND NOW, NUMBER 6 WILL PERFORM...
COME ON, SHIBA-CHAN
HERE COMES OUR FIRST CANDIDATE FOR FIRST PLACE!!

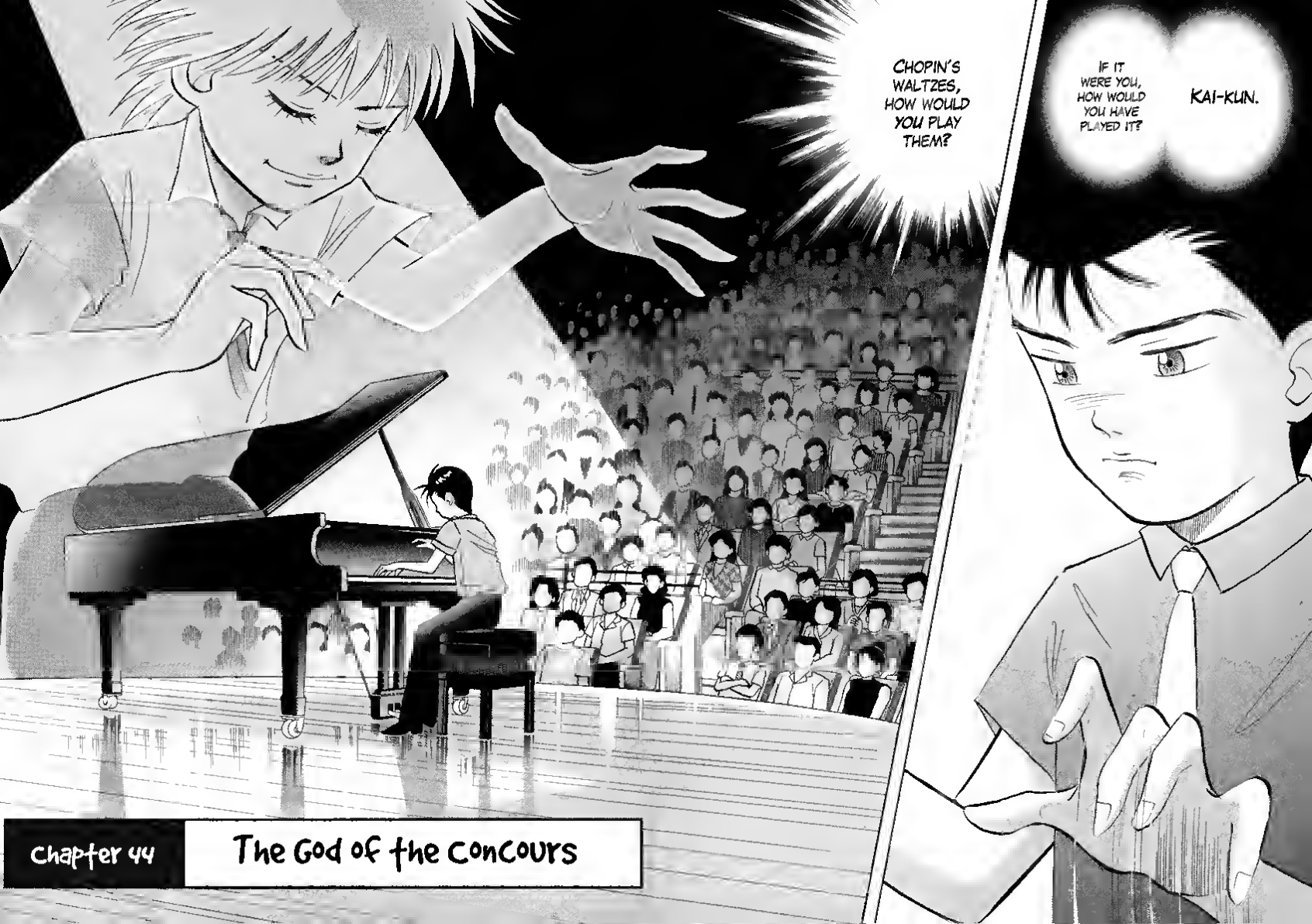
IF THE HUMANS WANT SOMEONE TO IMITATE, THEY SHOULD CHOOSE HIM!
THEN THEY'D SEE IMPROVEMENT...
パパチ
AMAMIYA SYUHEI-KUN.

BECAUSE HE...
IS THE ORDINARY MAN'S PRODIGY!
不在の存在 END

PROMISE ME, AMAMIYA!
AND THEN YOU HAVE TO BECOME NUMBER ONE IN JAPAN!
WIN THE REGIONAL FINALS... AND GOT TO THE ALL-JAPAN FINALS...
AS PROMISED, I'LL BE TAKING THE VICTORY HERE.
KAI-KUN...

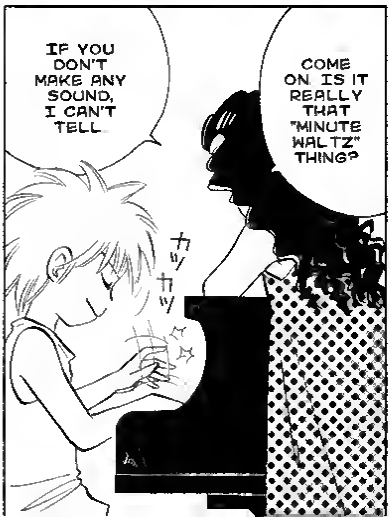
I AM INVINCIBLE...
BECAUSE, IN A COMPETITION WITHOUT YOU...

THE "MINUTE WALTZ".
SO THIS IS AMAMIYA SYUHEI'S CHOPIN...



Chapter 44 The God of the Concours

...
パラパラ
カタカタ


IF YOU DON'T MAKE ANY SOUND, I CAN'T TELL
COME ON IS IT REALLY THAT "MINUTE WALTZ" THING?
カッカッ

パラパラ
カタカタ
カタカタ

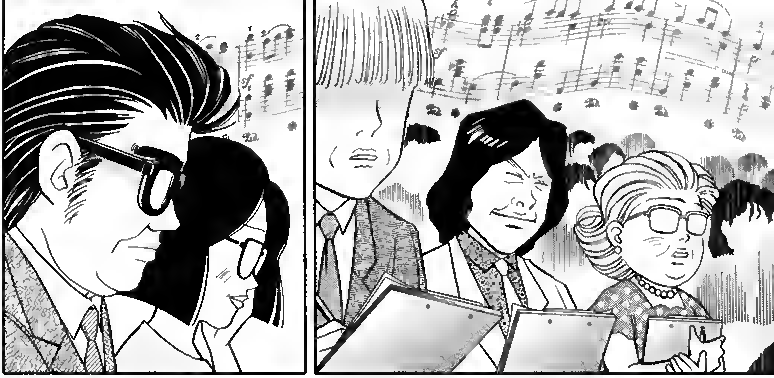
EVEN IF WE'RE JUST PRE-TEND-ING
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO SAID WE SHOULD JUST PLAY PRETEND CONCOURS
QUIT YOUR WHINING. I'M *PRE-TENDING* TO PLAY
カタカタ
ピラピラ
VISUAL-ISING? WHAT'S THAT?
TRY CLOSING YOUR EYES AND VISUALIS-ING IT!
YOU IMAGINE SOMETHING IN YOUR HEAD
I CAN SEE A DOG CLAWING ITS WAY ACROSS THE FLOOR
カタカタ
ピラピラ
THE IMPORTANT THING IS YOUR IMAGE OF THE PIECE!
カッカッ
カタカタ

カッ
カッ カッ
FINE, DON'T DO IT THEN.
カッ カッ カッ カッ
OH! NOW IT'S CHEWING ON A SANDAL

AFTER PLAYING A PROPER PIANO...
AHH~

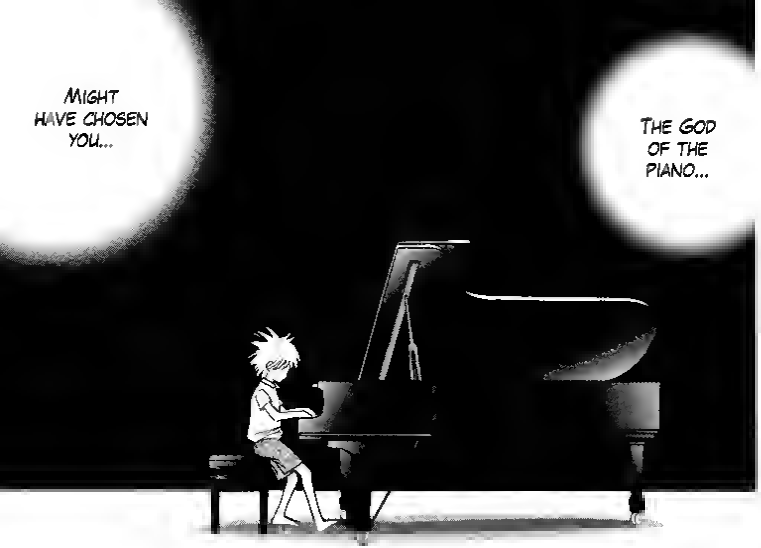
IF ONLY I COULD PLAY THE PIANO AS MUCH AS I WANT.
JUST IMAGINING AND STUFF DOESN'T CUT IT.
カッ カッ
カ カ

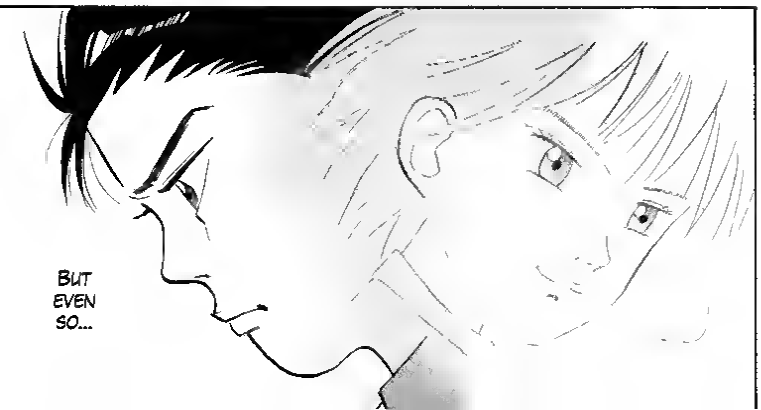
I WANT TO PLAY!



KAI-KUN.

I'LL BECOME NUMBER ONE.
DON'T YOU WORRY...


MIGHT HAVE CHOSEN YOU...
THE GOD OF THE PIANO...


BUT EVEN SO...

THE GOD OF THE CONCOURS ...
HAS SURELY CHOSEN ME.

パチパチパチパ

DOES ONE HAVE TO GO THROUGH TO REACH THIS KIND OF PRECISION?
IT MAKES YOU WONDER... JUST HOW MANY LESSONS...
YES, IT'S QUITE ASTONISHING
HONESTLY I WISH I COULD BOIL DOWN JUST THE DIRT OF HIS FINGERNAILS AND FEED TO THOSE OTHER KIDS.
AMAMIYA SYUHEI-KUN.
パチパチパチパチ
THAT WAS NUMBER 8,
I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT BE HESITATING AFTER ICHINOSE'S PERFORMANCE. WELL DONE!
THAT'S ALL RIGHT, SYUHEI. IT'S FINE THIS WAY.
THIS IS AMAZING HE EVEN PLAYED THE SECOND PIECE WITHOUT A SINGLE MISTAKE.
HMM YES
パチパチパチパチパチパチ
KYAAAA! WONDER-FUL ♡
NORIKA! YOU'RE REALLY LOUD.

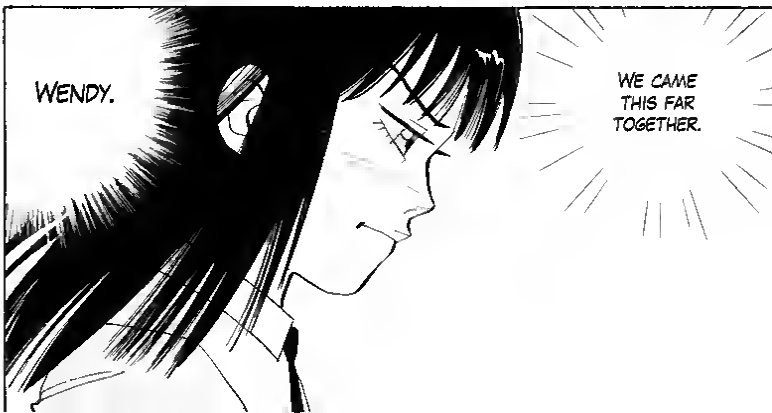
Kyaaaa
Amamiya-kuuun!
IF IT WERE KAI-KUN..
HOW WOULD HE HAVE PLAYED?
HE REALLY ...
WOULD HAVE SURPASSED PERFECTION, RIGHT?

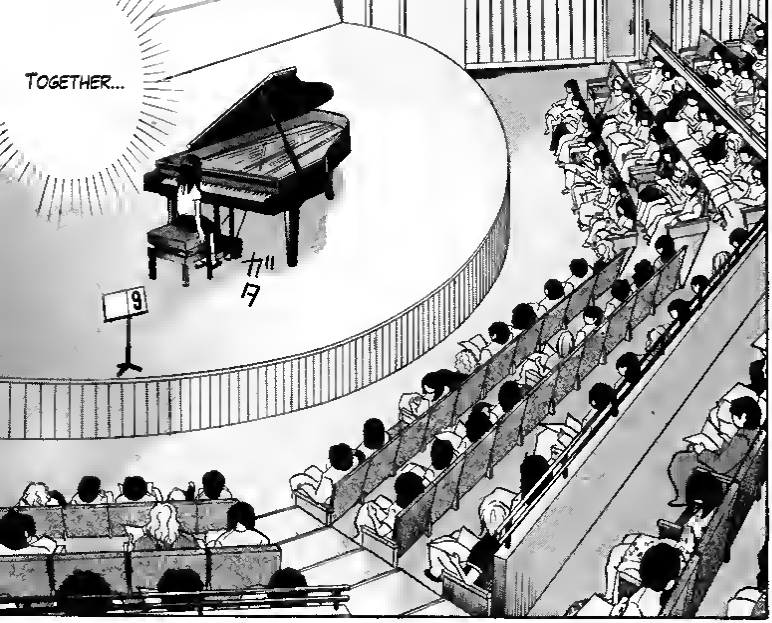
HERE I GO, WENDY.
AND NEXT UP, WE HAVE NUMBER 9...
A PERFOR-MANCE FROM MARUYAMA TAKAKO.

TAKAKO ...
TAKAKO OJOU-SAMA.
WENDY.
I HAVE ARRIVED.
I'M AT THE FINALS.

WENDY!

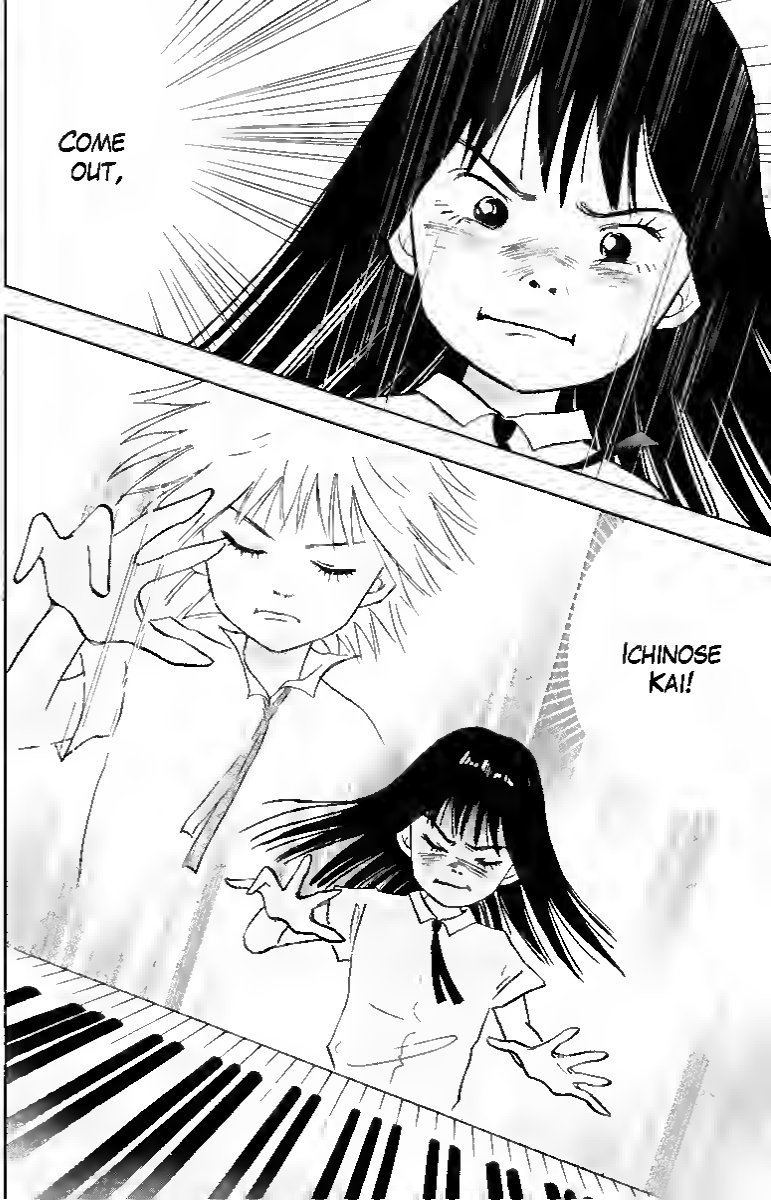
IT'S START-ING TO RAIN YOU KNOW
KAI, LET'S GO HOME AL-READY


WENDY.
WE CAME THIS FAR TOGETHER.


TOGETHER...
カ
ク
9

WENDY.
COME,
カッ カッ カッ

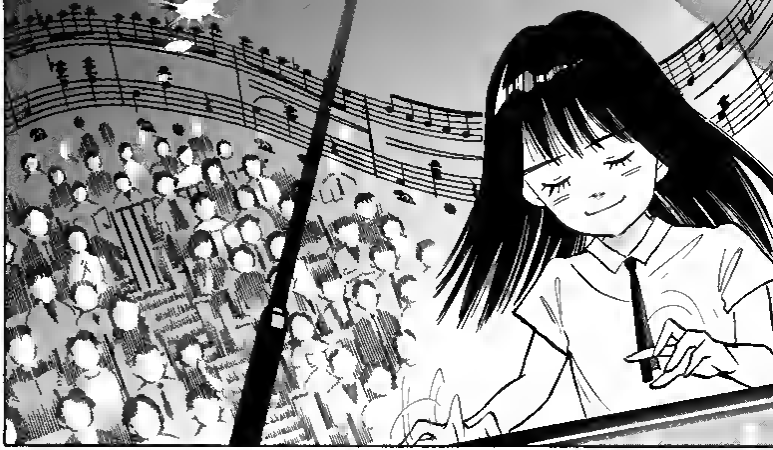
LET'S BLOW THEM AWAY.

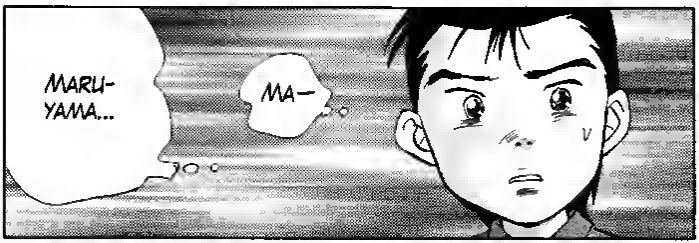

COME OUT,
ICHINOSE KAI!

LET'S PLAY, TOGETHER.
I'VE BEEN WANTING TO PLAY WITH YOU EVER SINCE.

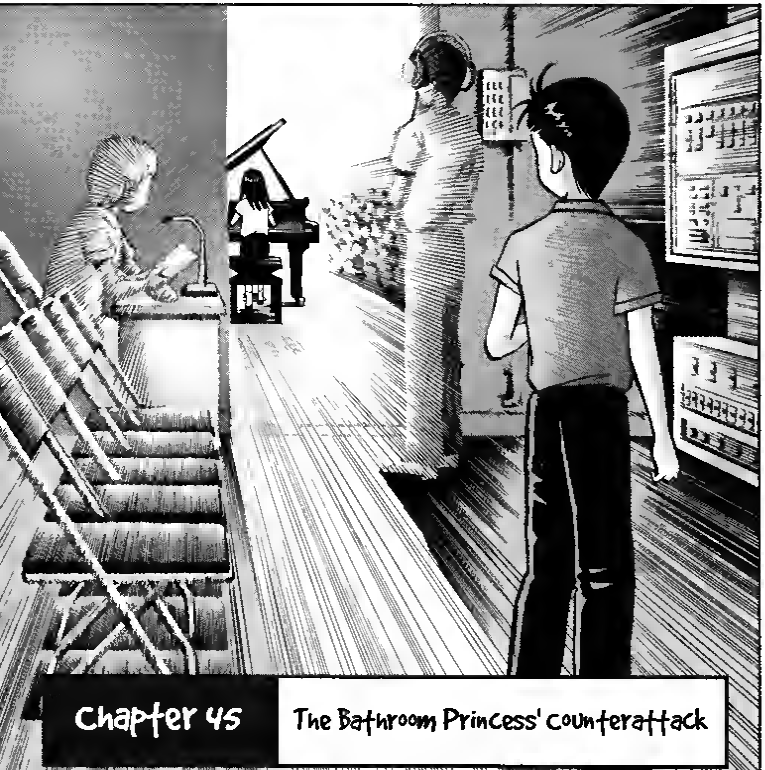
"THE MINUTE WALTZ"

AH...
...
WHAT!?




MARU-
YAMA...
MA—

TAKAKO...



Chapter 45 The Bathroom Princess' counterattack

SURELY EVEN MY OWN PIANO...
IT'S DIFFERENT FROM THE OTHER CONTESTANTS...

THIS PIANO...
I DON'T REALLY UNDERSTAND WHAT IT IS BUT...

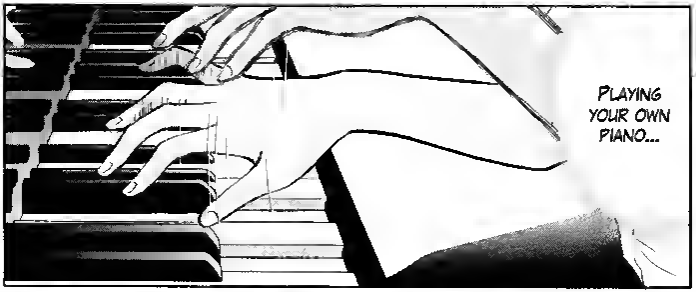
KAI-KUN.
WHAT EVER DID YOU MEAN BY THAT?
LOOK, I'M TELLING YOU... THIS MARUYAMA TAKAKO
SHE'S REALLY AMAZING WHEN SHE GOES INTO BATHROOM PRINCESS MODE! SHE'LL GIVE YOU A RUN FOR YOUR MONEY!
WHAT IS A "BATHROOM PRINCESS!?"
THIS IS...

I IMAGINED MYSELF REHEARSING IT OVER AND OVER, ON THE TOILET.
MY PIANO.
THE BEST PIANO...

RIGHT NOW YOU ARE HUMAN WENDY! YOU'RE ICHINOSE KAI!
WENDY, DON'T MAKE ME REPEAT MYSELF!
YES... KAI...
WENDY...
OPEN YOUR MOUTH!
BECAUSE OF THAT I WAS ABLE TO PLAY ALONGSIDE YOU ALL THE TIME.

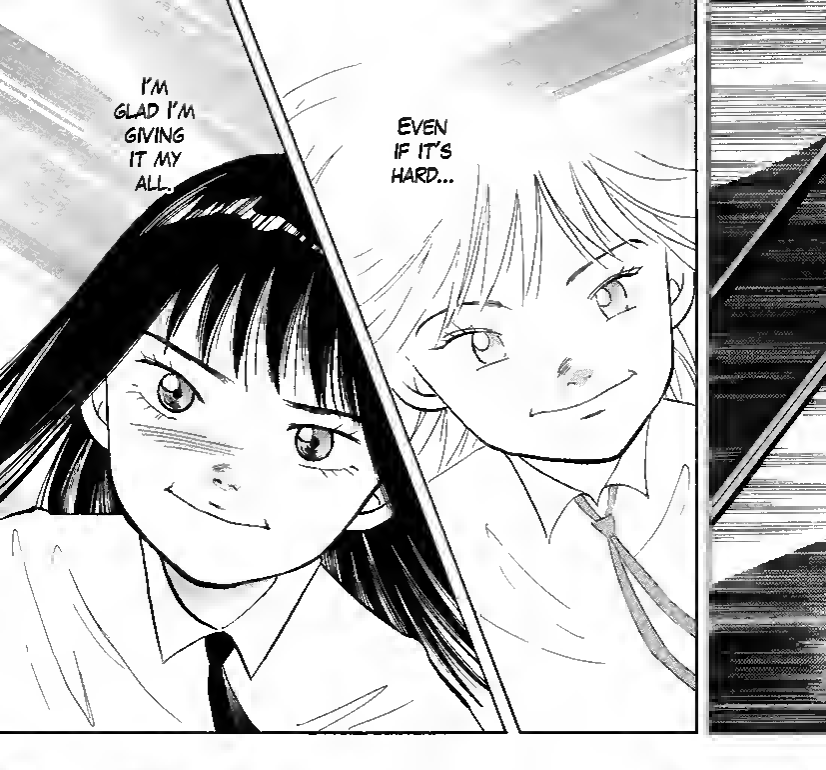
FOR GIVING ME COURAGE...
FOR THE SAKE OF PLAYING MY OWN PIANO...
I WAS ABLE TO PLAY MY BEST PIANO.
I COULD CONCEN-TRATE...
BELIEVING IN MYSELF...

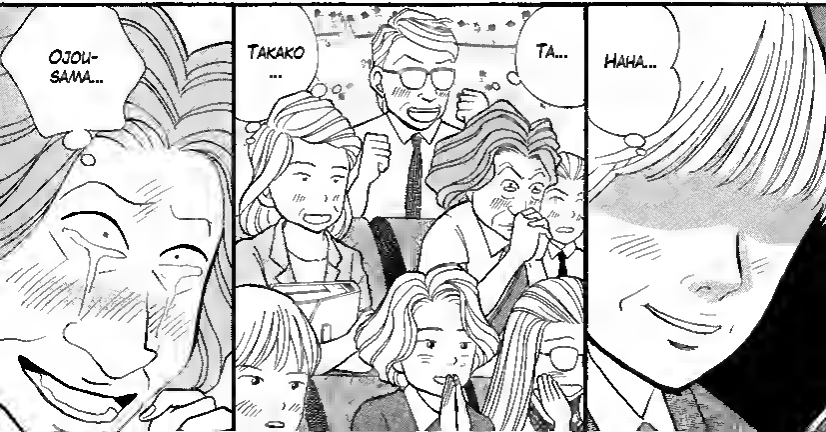
KAI...
I UNDERSTAND NOW.


PLAYING YOUR OWN PIANO...

YOU KNOW, KAI...
THERE'S NOTHING MORE BEAUTIFUL ...

I'M SO GLAD I'M PLAYING THE PIANO.
...

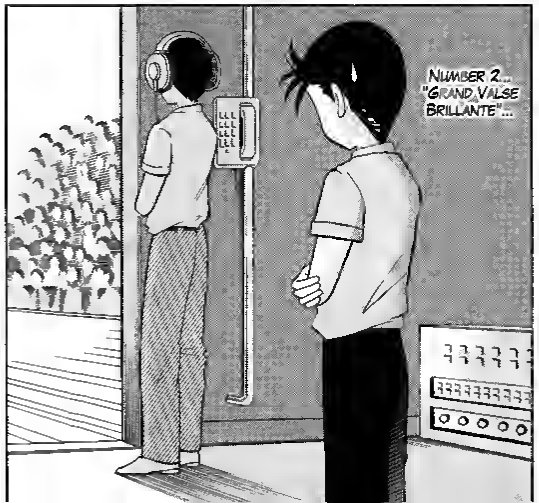

I'M GLAD I'M GIVING IT MY ALL.
EVEN IF IT'S HARD...


OJOU-SAMA...
TAKAKO ...
TA...
HAHA...

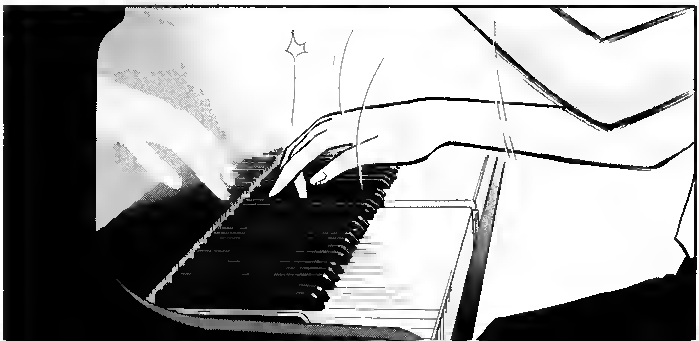
THAT I'M ME....
I'M SO GLAD...

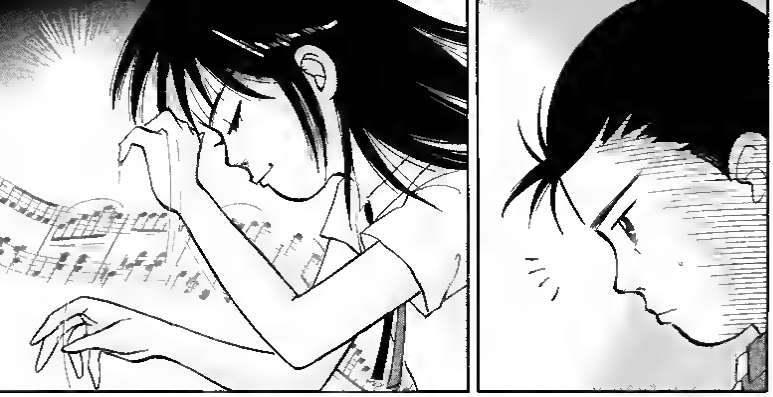
THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT IT THAT MY PIANO LACKS.

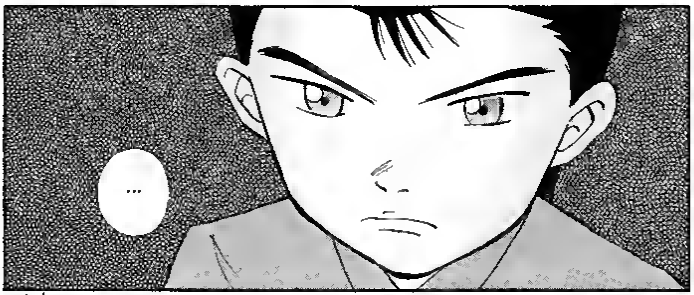
EVEN THOUGH IT'S A DIFFERENT PIECE RIGHT NOW, THIS RESTLESS FEELING IN MY CHEST WON'T SETTLE DOWN.
WHAT IS IT WITH THIS PIANO ...!?


NUMBER 2... "GRAND VALSE BRILLANTE"...

BUT
WHAT
IS IT!?






…

パチパチパチパチ
全日本学生ピアノコンクール
中部南地区 本選

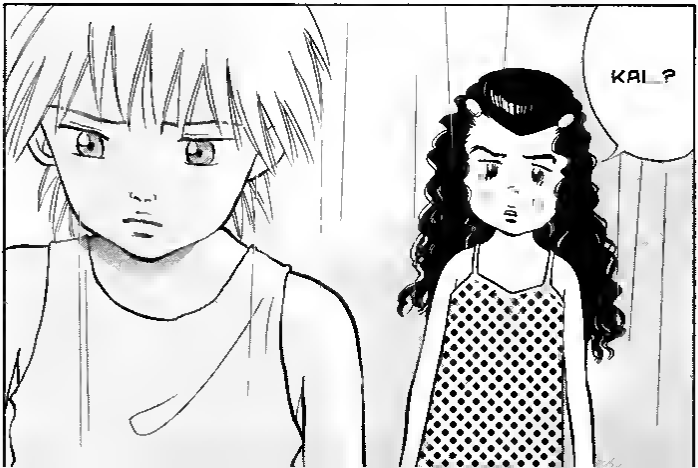
Chapter 46

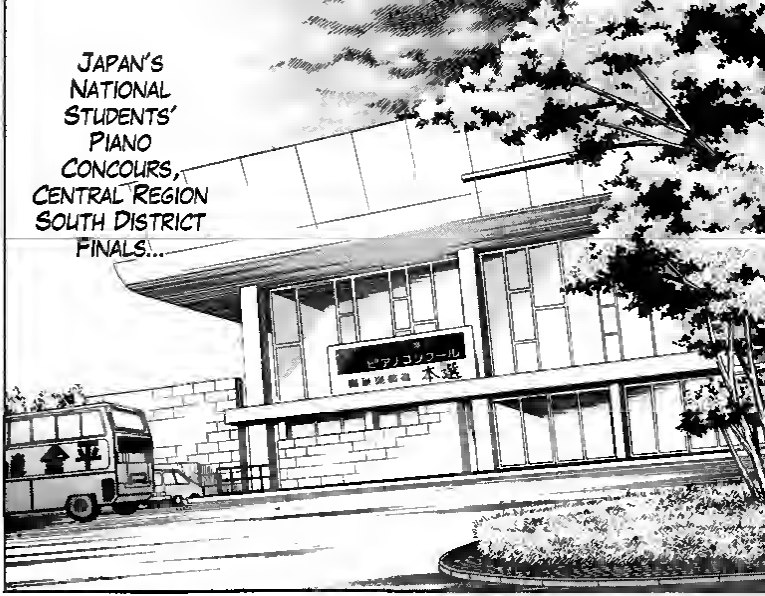
objection!!!

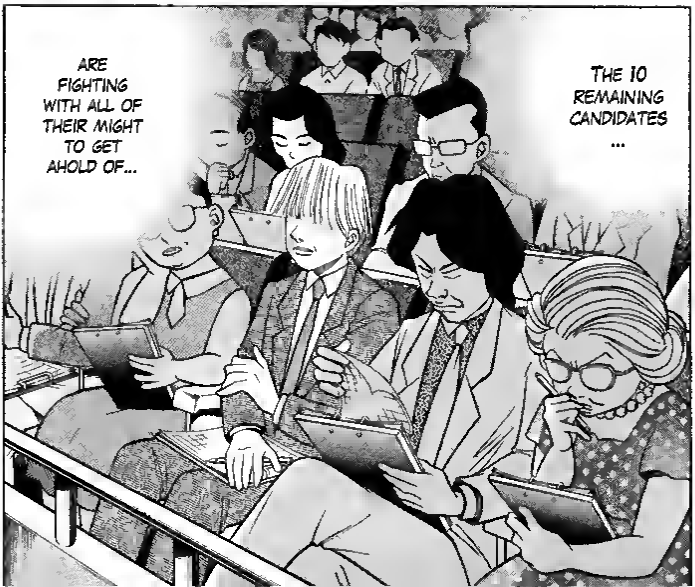
KAAAAI—
THE RAIN IS REALLY COMING DOWN NOW...
GIVE IT UP AND LET'S GO HOME
カタ
カタ

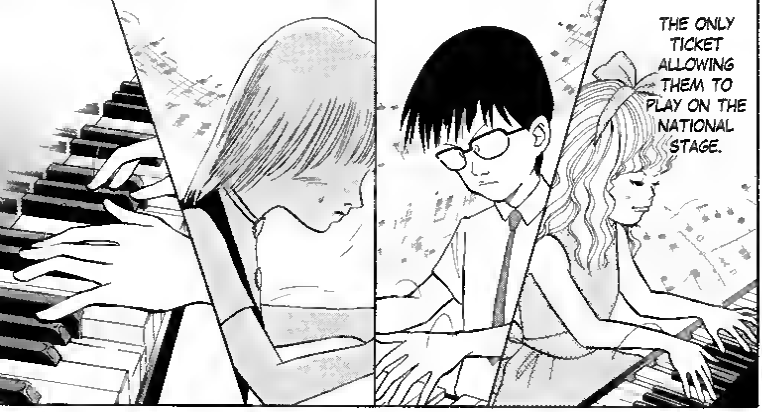
THE PIANO WON'T MAKE ANY SOUND !!!
カタ カタ
カタカタ
THE SOUND
WON'T COME OUT!!!
KAI— COME ON...

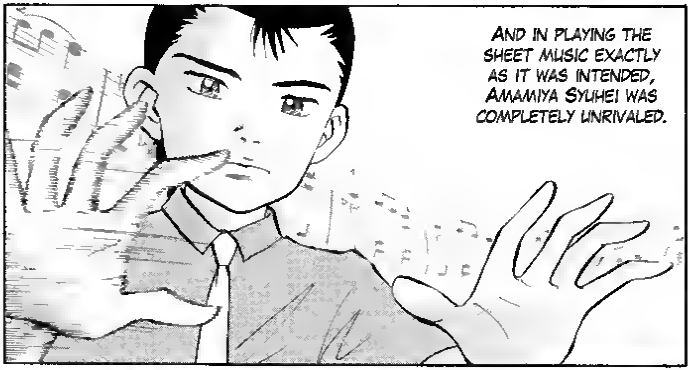
HAS BROKE !!!
MY PIANO...


KAI_?


JAPAN'S NATIONAL STUDENTS' PIANO CONCOURS, CENTRAL REGION SOUTH DISTRICT FINALS...
ピアノコンクール
本選

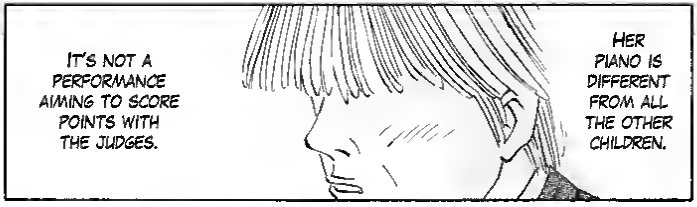

ARE FIGHTING WITH ALL OF THEIR MIGHT TO GET AHOLD OF...
THE 10 REMAINING CANDIDATES ...


THE ONLY TICKET ALLOWING THEM TO PLAY ON THE NATIONAL STAGE.


AND IN PLAYING THE SHEET MUSIC EXACTLY AS IT WAS INTENDED, AMAMIYA SYUHEI WAS COMPLETELY UNRIVALED.

BUT...

THIS MARUYAMA TAKAKO...


IT'S NOT A PERFORMANCE AIMING TO SCORE POINTS WITH THE JUDGES.
HER PIANO IS DIFFERENT FROM ALL THE OTHER CHILDREN.

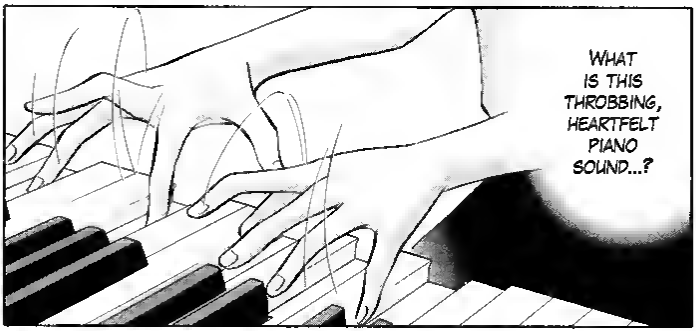
WHAT MIGHT IT BE? THIS STRANGE, HEART-WARMING SENSATION!..?

SOME-
THING!!!
THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT THIS PERFORMANCE THAT MINE LACKS...
ジワン
ジワン

WHAT IS THAT SOMETHING!?
WH-

TAKAKO.
MARU-
YAMA...

HER PIANO HAS CHANGED SINCE LAST TIME.
THIS GIRL... IS THE SAME GIRL WHO FINISHED IN SECOND PLACE BEHIND AMAMIYA SYUHEI...


WHAT IS THIS THROBBING, HEARTFELT PIANO SOUND...?

HAHA, IMAGINE THAT... MAKING THE PIANO COME ALIVE WITH EMOTION...
IT'S AS IF THERE'S A SENSE OF LOVE COMING FROM THE PIANO.

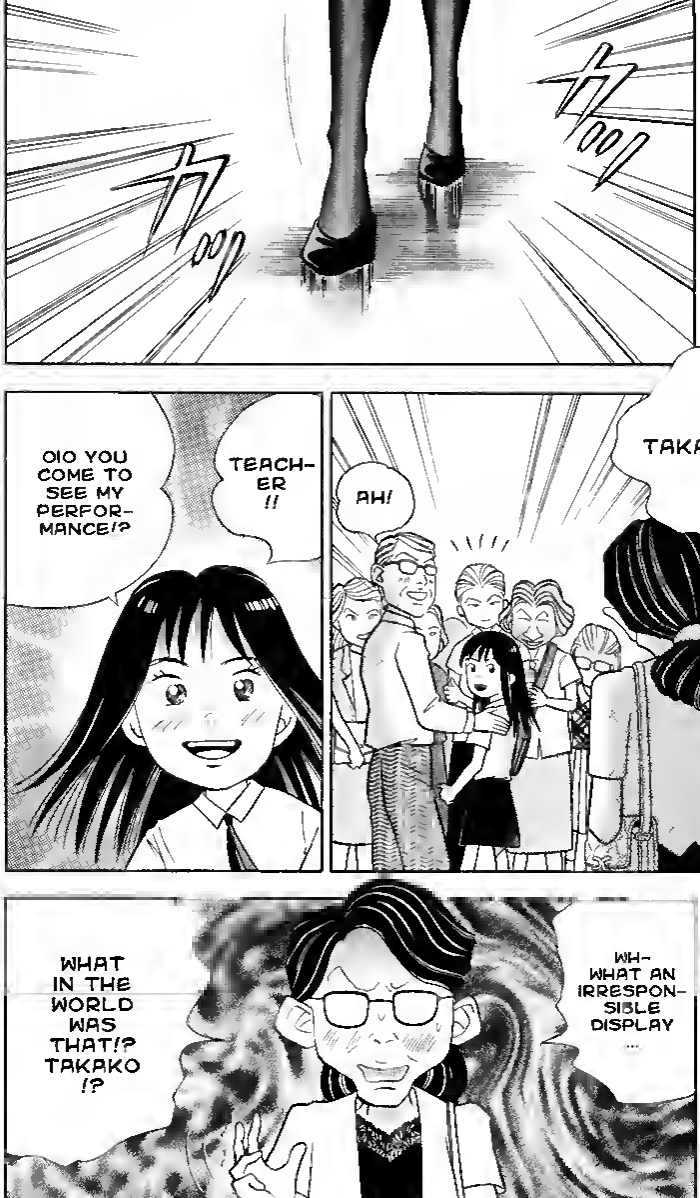
AH...
ICHINOSE KAI'S IN-FLUENCE!?
MIGHT IT BE THAT BOY...
BE THAT AS IT MAY... THIS WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE WITHOUT HAVING A LOT OF ABILITY TO BEGIN WITH
... IF SO, THEN HER PLAY CHANGED IN A MERE TWO WEEKS

THIS IS QUITE THE SURPRISE.
HAHA...
WHAT IS THAT SOME-THING!?
WHAT IS IT!?

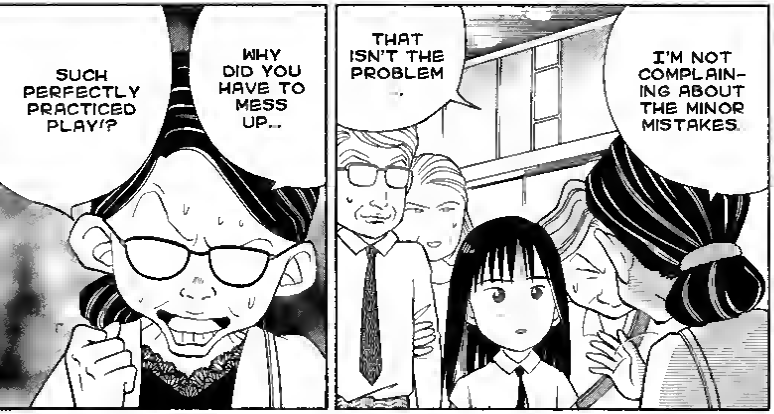
A MIS-TAKE!?
IF I LISTEN CARE-FULLY ...
...
MARUYAMA TAKAKO'S PLAY...
IS FILLED WITH MINOR MISTAKES.

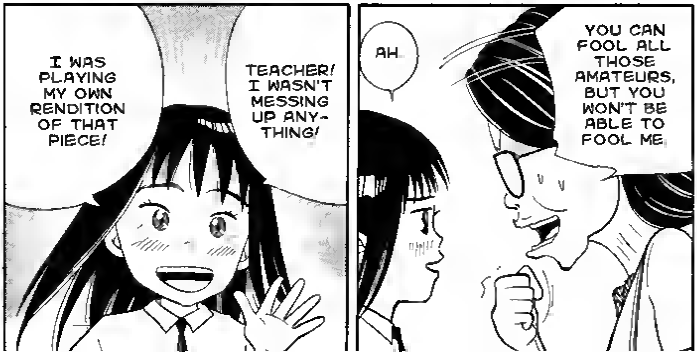
LISTENING TO THIS KIND OF PERFOR-MANCE..
YOU'D GO CRAZY PAYING ATTENTION TO ALL THE MIS-TAKES.
BUT COUNTING MISTAKES, IS SOMETHING A MACHINE COULD DO.

AND THAT CONCLUDES THE PERFORMANCES BY ALL 10 CONTESTANTS.
THE RESULTS WILL BE ANNOUNCED DURING THE AWARDS CEREMONY PART OF THE PROGRAMME...


OIO YOU COME TO SEE MY PERFOR-MANCE!?
TEACH-ER !!
AH!
TAKAKO!
WHAT IN THE WORLD WAS THAT!? TAKAKO !?
WH-WHAT AN IRRESPON-SIBLE DISPLAY ...

THIS IS A COMPETITION IN PLAYING ACCURATELY
AFTER OVERCOMING YOUR STAGE-FRIGHT, WORKING SO HARD TO DRILL IT INTO YOU,
HUH?


SUCH PERFECTLY PRACTICED PLAY!?
WHY DID YOU HAVE TO MESS UP...
THAT ISN'T THE PROBLEM.
I'M NOT COMPLAINING ABOUT THE MINOR MISTAKES.


I WAS PLAYING MY OWN RENDITION OF THAT PIECE!
TEACHER! I WASN'T MESSING UP ANYTHING!
AH.
YOU CAN FOOL ALL THOSE AMATEURS, BUT YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO FOOL ME.

THIS IS YOUR HUGELY IMPOR-TANT RECITAL YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT ...
ARE YOU DAY-DREAMING AGAIN!?
YOU CAN ONLY GO TO THE NATION-WIDE RECITAL IF YOU GET FIRST PLACE
IF YOU HAD STUCK TO THE SHEET MUSIC, YOU WOULD HAVE HAD A CHANCE TO BATTLE IT OUT WITH AMAMIYA SYUHEI FOR FIRST PLACE
ONLY ONE PERSON HERE GETS TO GO TO THE NATION-WIDE RECITAL !!!

WE'LL RANK THEM IN ORDER BY THESE SCORES?
THEN, IF THERE AREN'T ANY OBJEC-TIONS,
審査員控室
[Judges' Deliberation Room]
パチ
パチパチ
パチ
パチパチ
パチ

NO OBJEC-TION!!!
NO OBJEC-TION!!
パチ
パチパチ
パチ
パチ

パチパチ
SURE!
IT'S PRETTY OBVIOUS WHO THE WINNER IS, THIS TIME.
パチパチ
パチパチ

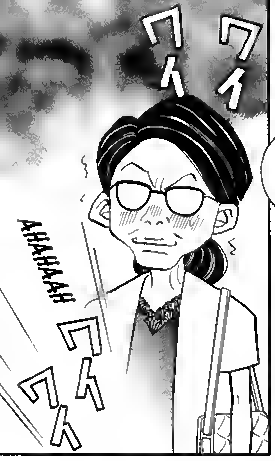
I LEARNED MY LESSON LAST TIME WITH ICHINOSE KAI!
HAHA, YOU MEAN ABOUT MARUYAMA TAKAKO? I'M NOT
HUH? YOU AREN'T GOING TO STAND UP AND PROTEST THIS TIME, SHIBA?
WHAT YOU'RE REALLY SAYING IS THAT I'M A STUBBORN MAN, RIGHT?
SHIBA, YOU'RE REALLY VERY HONEST
MASTER SAGA, YOU ALWAYS SEEM SO SURE OF YOUR OWN OPINION
IS THAT SO?
HUH?
NOTHING WILL EVER CHANGE IF YOU AREN'T WILLING TO BE STUBBORN!
THEN CARVE THIS INTO YOUR MEMORY,

OBJEC-
TION
!!!
MASTER
SAGA
HUH?

IN THIS WORLD,
THERE ARE RULES THAT ARE NOT MEANT TO BE BROKEN, AND THERE ARE RULES THAT ARE MEANT TO BE BROKEN
REMEMBER THAT, TOO
TEACHER
IT PAINS ME THAT YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND ME.
BUT I PUT EVERYTHING THAT I AM INTO THAT PERFORMANCE
MY ENTIRE LIFE WAS IN IT
ENTIRE LIFE!? YOU'RE ONLY 12 YEARS OLD
ONLY I COULD HAVE PLAYED THAT.
TODAY WAS MY BEST PERFORMANCE EVER.

CHANGED.
AFTER MEETING ICHINOSE KAI, MY PLAY HAS
I WON'T STICK TO THE NOTES OF THE SHEET MUSIC ANYMORE.
I'M NOT GOING TO PLAY FOR ANYONE'S APPROVAL ANYMORE.
MY GOAL...
IS TO CREATE SUCH A PASSIONATE IMPACT OF MY OWN!!!

IF THAT IS NO GOOD...
THEN THIS COMPETI-TION IS NO GOOD!! I DON'T NEED IT.
WH-
UMM, TEACHER
I MIGHT JUST BE AN AMA-TEUR
BUT I THOUGHT TAKAKO'S PERFOR-MANCE WAS THE BEST
THAT'S BECAUSE YOU'RE AN AMATEUR !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AHAHAAH
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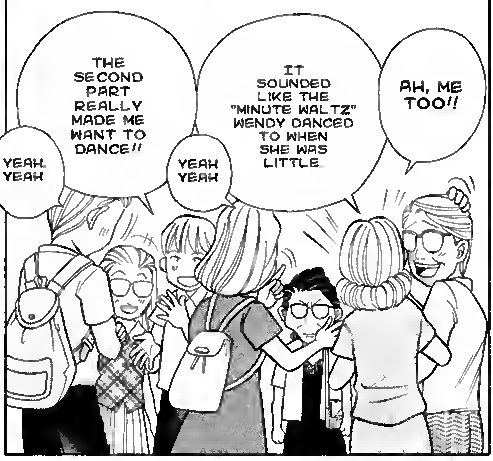
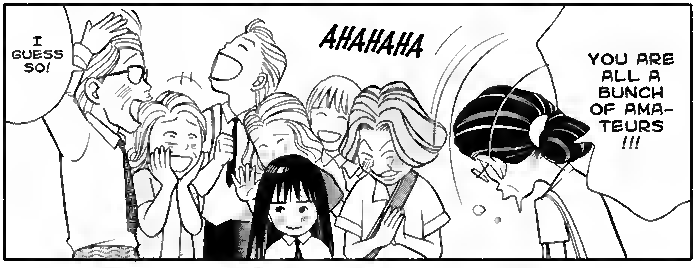
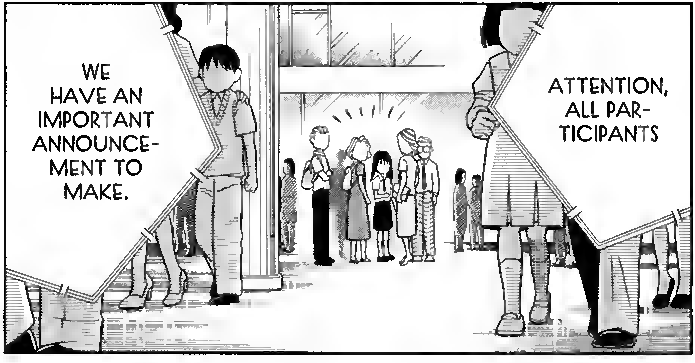
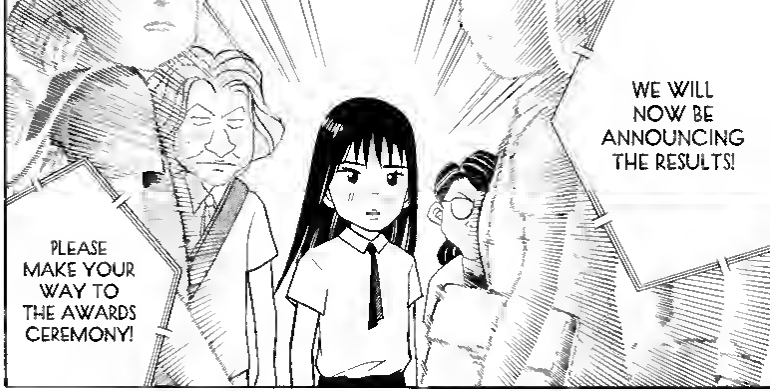
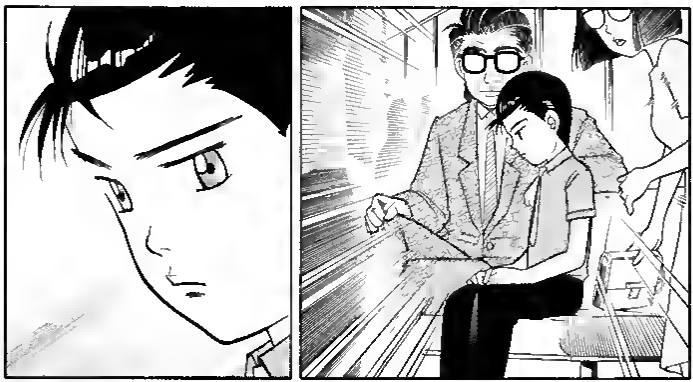
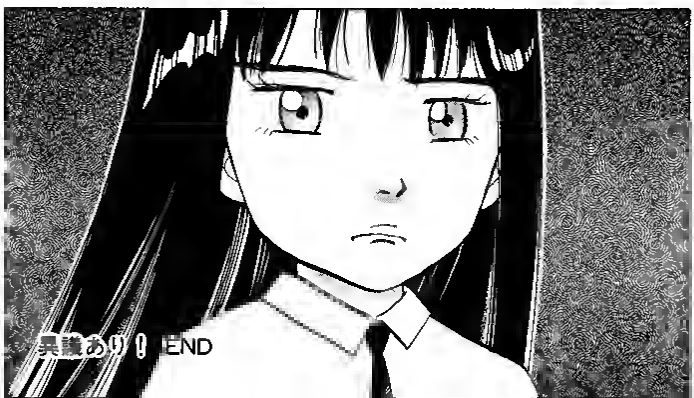

THE SECOND PART REALLY MADE ME WANT TO DANCE!!
YEAH, YEAH
IT SOUNDED LIKE THE "MINUTE WALTZ" WENDY DANCED TO WHEN SHE WAS LITTLE
YEAH YEAH
AH, ME TOO!!


I GUESS SO!
AHAHAHA
YOU ARE ALL A BUNCH OF AMA-TEURS !!!

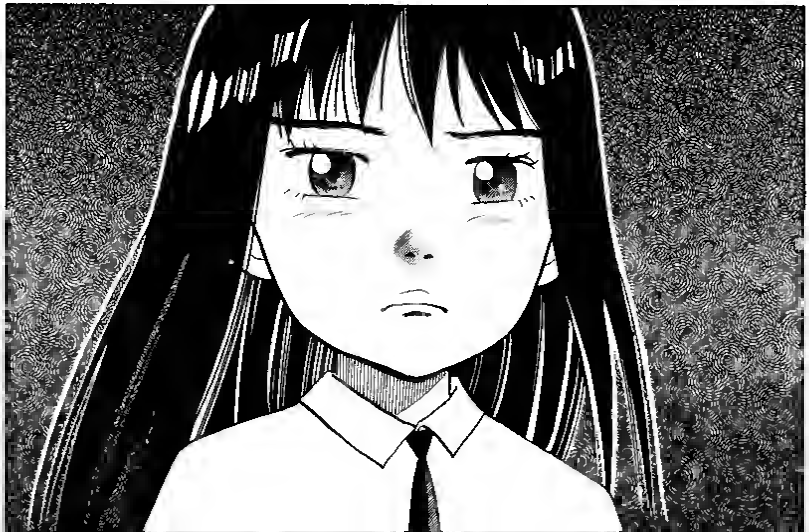

WE HAVE AN IMPORTANT ANNOUNCE-MENT TO MAKE.
ATTENTION, ALL PAR-TICIPANTS

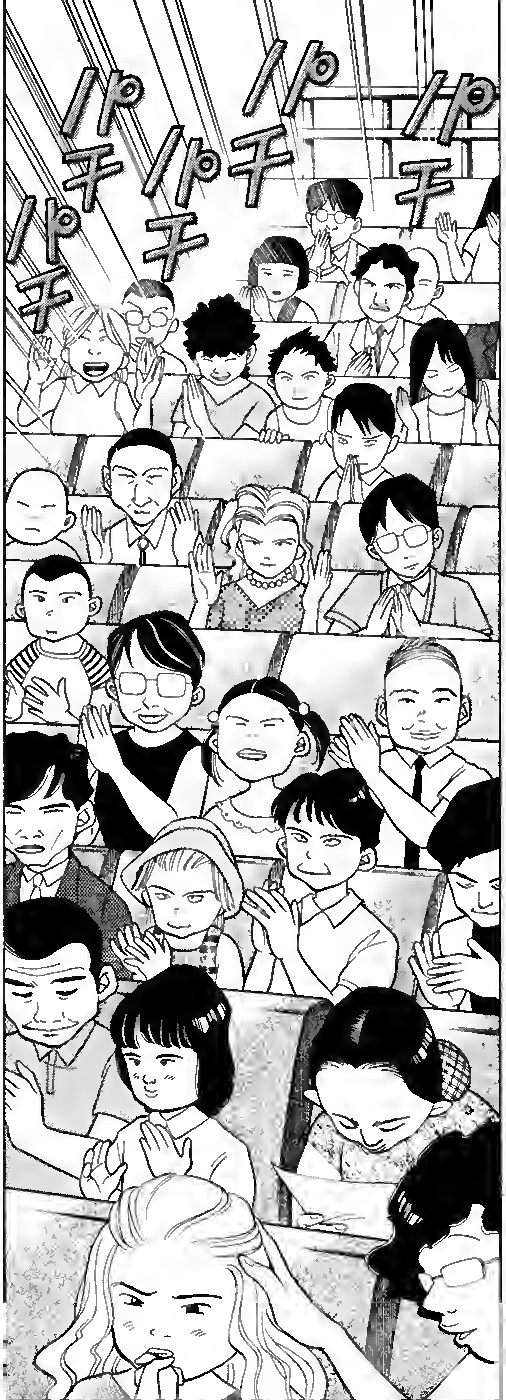

WE WILL NOW BE ANNOUNCING THE RESULTS!
PLEASE MAKE YOUR WAY TO THE AWARDS CEREMONY!




END

Chapter 47 What Can And Can't Be Judged

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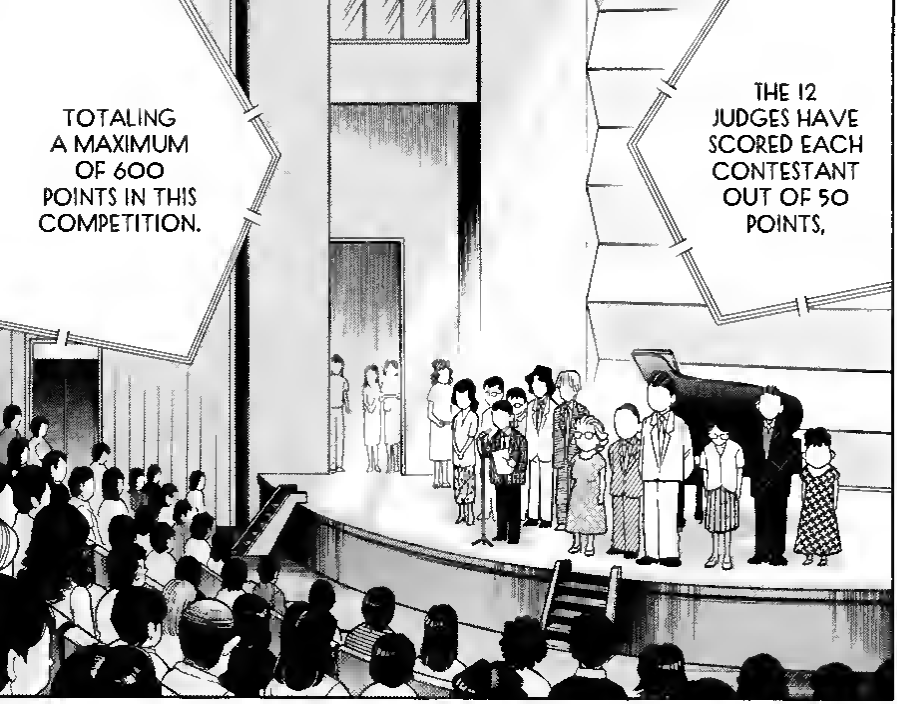
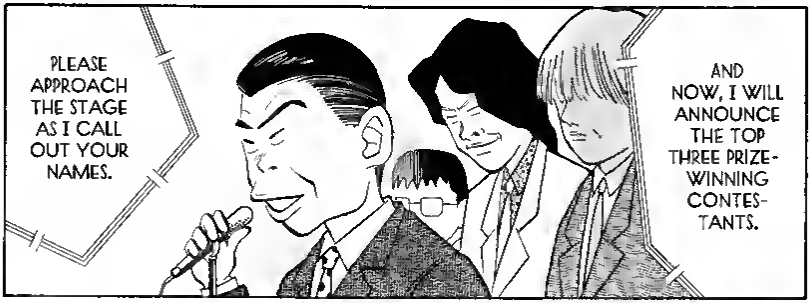
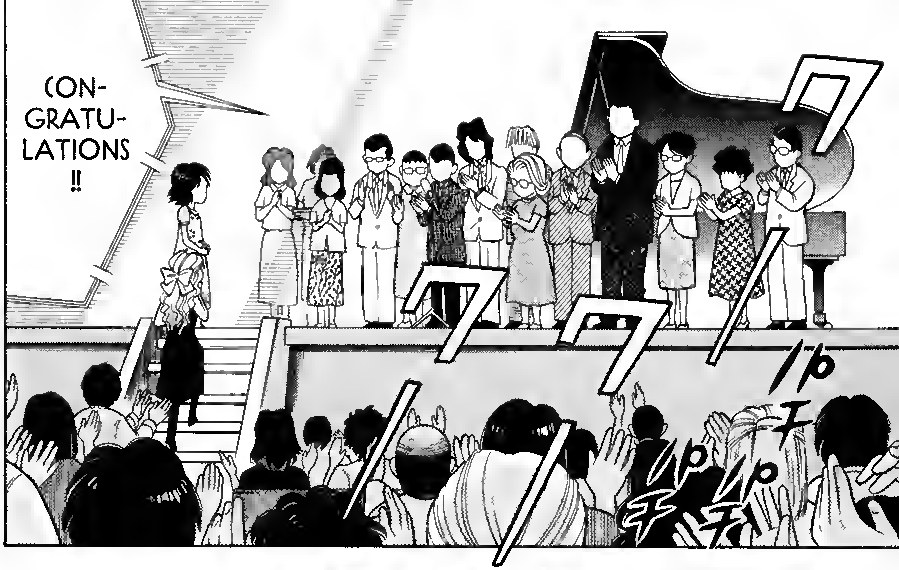

TOTALING A MAXIMUM OF 600 POINTS IN THIS COMPETITION.
THE 12 JUDGES HAVE SCORED EACH CONTESTANT OUT OF 50 POINTS,


PLEASE APPROACH THE STAGE AS I CALL OUT YOUR NAMES.
AND NOW, I WILL ANNOUNCE THE TOP THREE PRIZE-WINNING CONTES-TANTS.

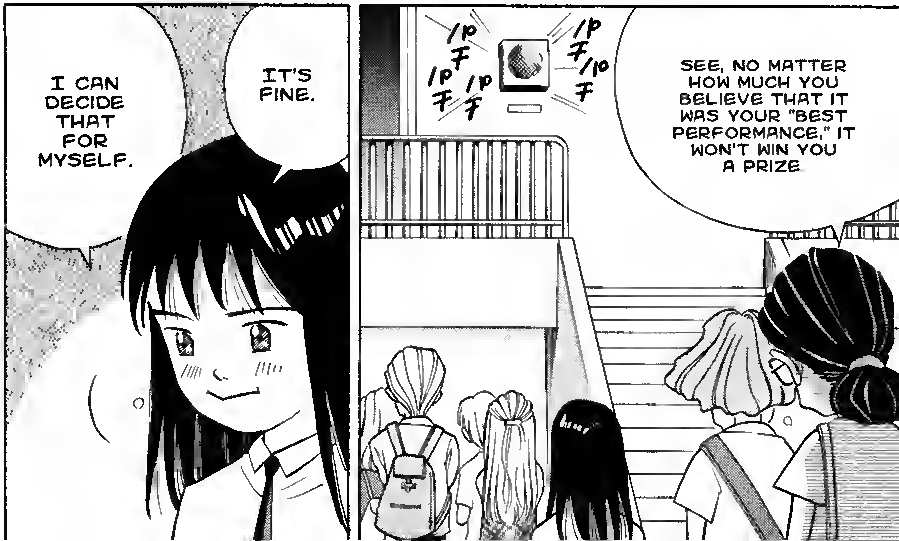
IN THIRD PLACE!!

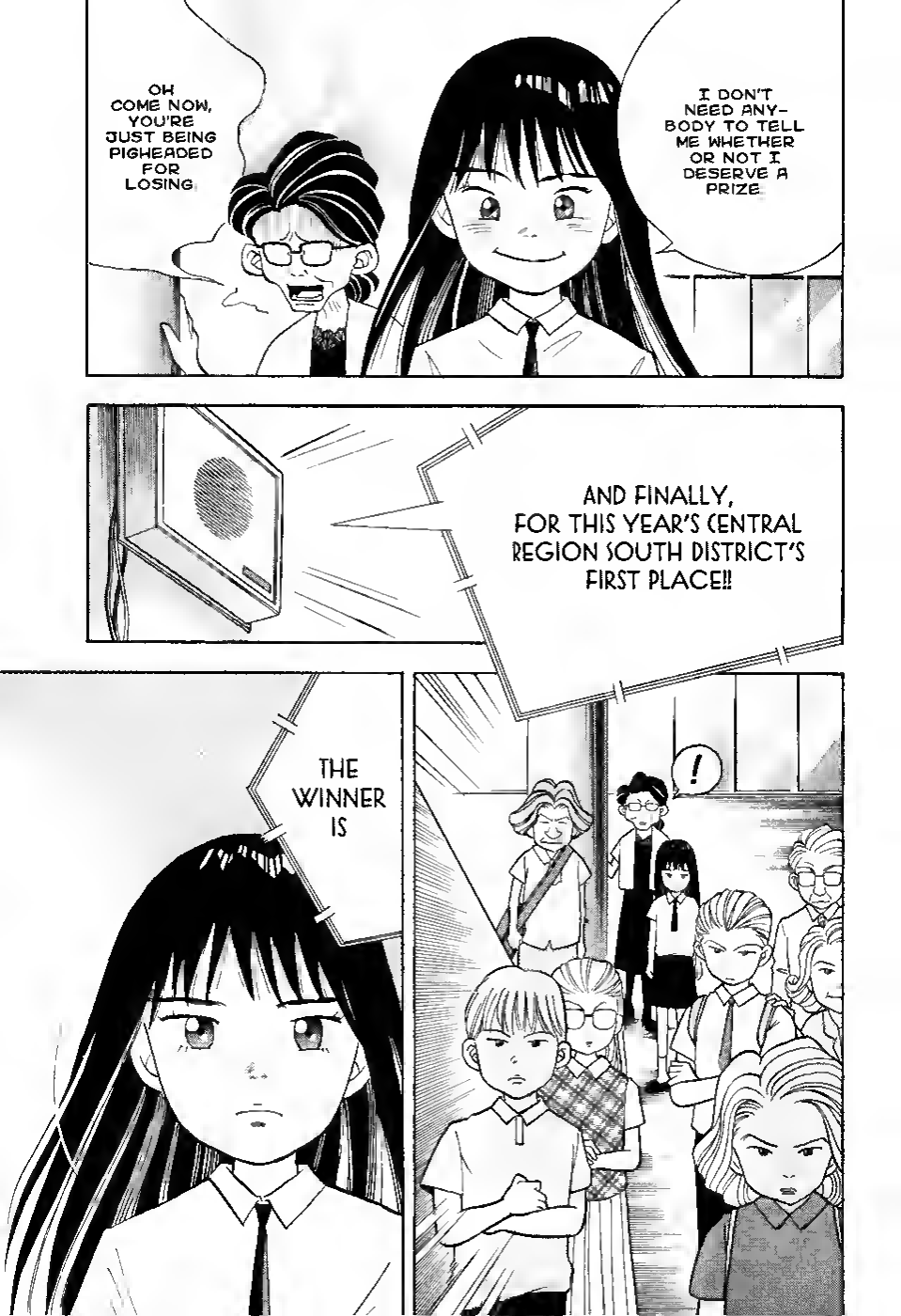
NUMBER 5
MISS TAKA-YAMA NENE!!
パチパチ
パチパチ
パチパチパチパチパチ
CON-GRATU-LATIONS!
パチパチパチパチパチ

パチパチパチパチ
I THOUGHT IT MIGHT HAVE AT LEAST GOTTEN YOU 3RD...
WE DIDN'T EVEN GET 3RD PLACE.
AHHHH...
THE RUNNER-UP
NOW, ONTO 2ND PLACE...
MISS NODA MIDORI !!!
NUMBER 2
NUMBER 9, NUMBER 9, NUMBER 9, NUMBER 9 MISS TAKAKO, MISS TAKAKO
NUMBER 9 MARUYAMA TAKAKO, NUMBER 9 MARUYAMA TAKAKO,

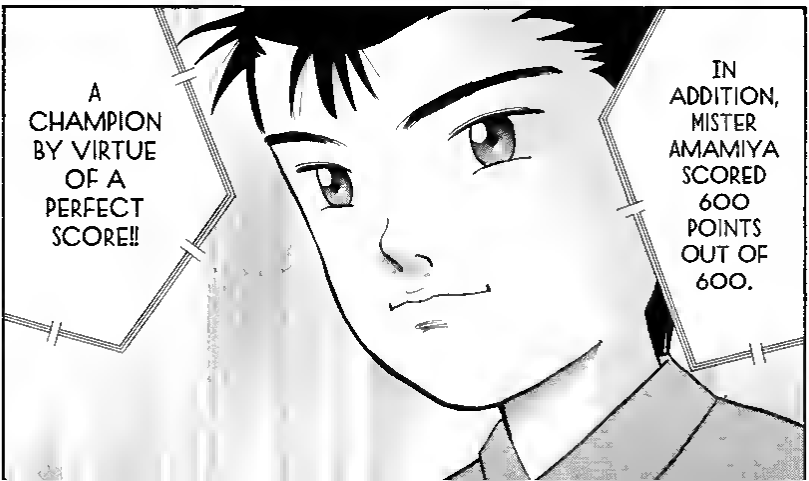

CON-
GRATU-
LATIONS
!!

sigh

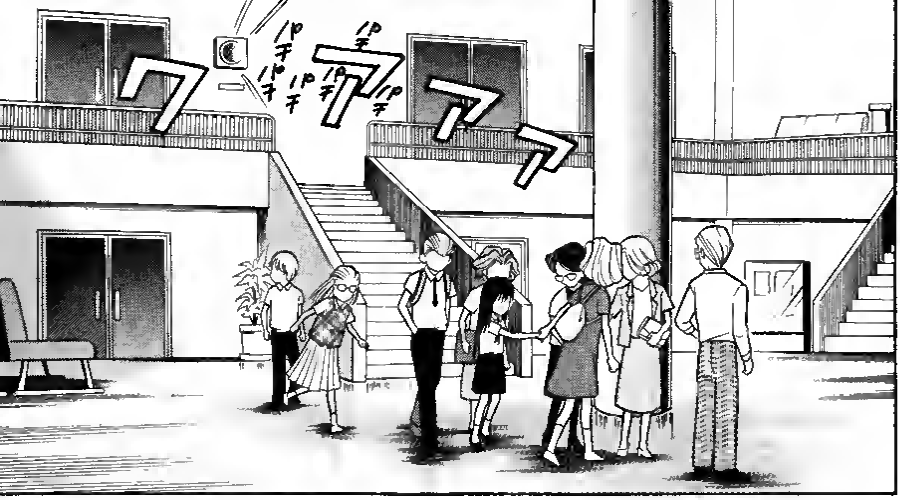

I CAN DECIDE THAT FOR MYSELF.
IT'S FINE.
SEE, NO MATTER HOW MUCH YOU BELIEVE THAT IT WAS YOUR "BEST PERFORMANCE," IT WON'T WIN YOU A PRIZE.


OH COME NOW, YOU'RE JUST BEING PIGHEADED FOR LOSING.
I DON'T NEED ANY-BODY TO TELL ME WHETHER OR NOT I DESERVE A PRIZE.
AND FINALLY, FOR THIS YEAR'S CENTRAL REGION SOUTH DISTRICT'S FIRST PLACE!!
THE WINNER IS
!

NUMBER 8...
AYA-MIYA SYUHEI !
Hyaaah!
KYA AAAA AMA-MIYA AAAA AAA!!
ワアアア


IN ADDITION, MISTER AMAMIYA SCORED 600 POINTS OUT OF 600.
A CHAMPION BY VIRTUE OF A PERFECT SCORE!!

THIS IS THE 56TH ANNUAL HOLDING OF THE EVENT,
BUT IT IS THE FIRST TIME A PARTICIPANT RECEIVED FULL SCORES FROM ALL 12 JUDGES IN THE HISTORY OF THE COMPETITION.
YOICHIRO, SYUHEI GOT A PERFECT SCORE.
HAHA WELL, HE IS AIMING TO BE THE BEST IN JAPAN HE SHOULD BE ABLE TO DO THIS MUCH.
CONGRATULATIONS.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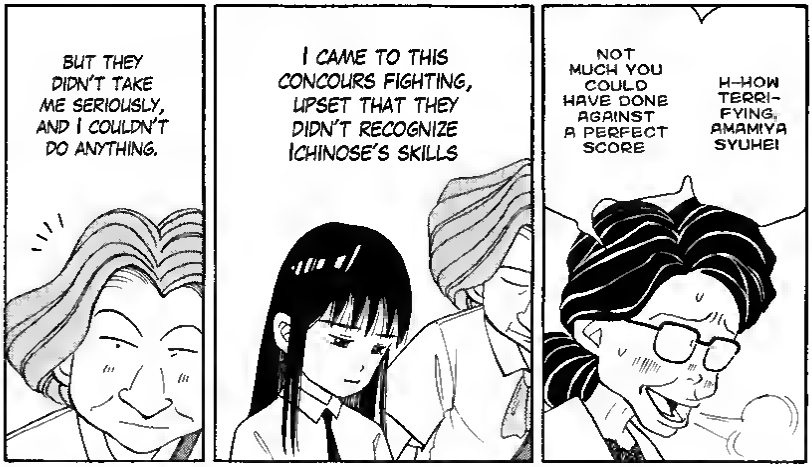
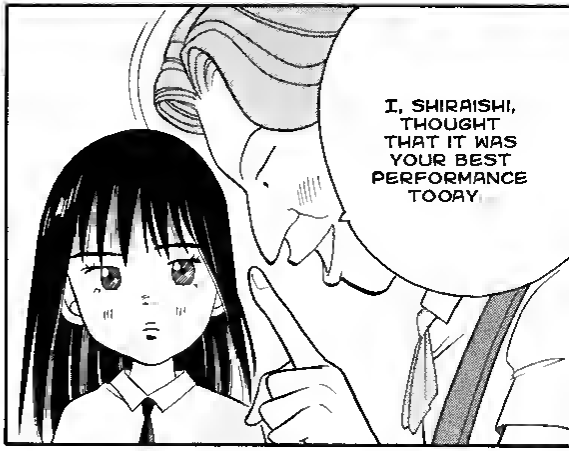

BUT THEY DIDN'T TAKE ME SERIOUSLY, AND I COULDN'T DO ANYTHING.
I CAME TO THIS CONCOURS FIGHTING, UPSET THAT THEY DIDN'T RECOGNIZE ICHINOSE'S SKILLS
NOT MUCH YOU COULD HAVE DONE AGAINST A PERFECT SCORE
H-HOW TERRI-FYING, AMAMIYA SYUHEI

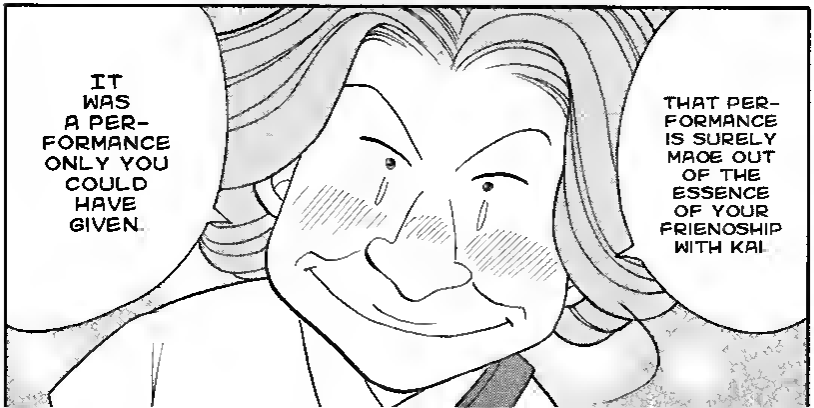
I'M STILL JUST A LITTLE KID TRYING TO PICK A FIGHT WITH ADULTS... I DON'T HAVE THE STRENGTH.
I'M SORRY, KAI...

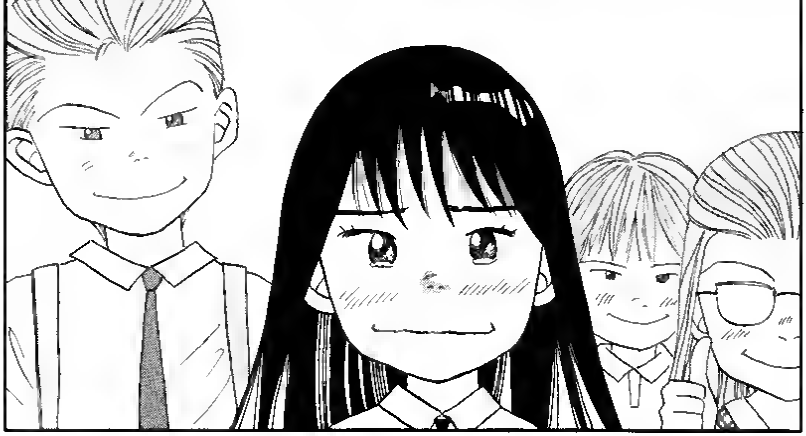
ON THIS GRAND STAGE OF THE FINALS, YOU WERE ABLE TO SHOW THEM THE "BATHROOM PRINCESS" TO THE BEST OF YOUR ABILITIES; JUST LIKE THAT BOY, ICHINOSE, SAID YOU COULD...

AREN'T YOU GLAD? MISS TAKAKO.

ANO TENOER-LY...
IT REACHED OUT INTO MY HEART, TOUCHING IT WARM-LY,


I, SHIRAISHI, THOUGHT THAT IT WAS YOUR BEST PERFORMANCE TODAY.

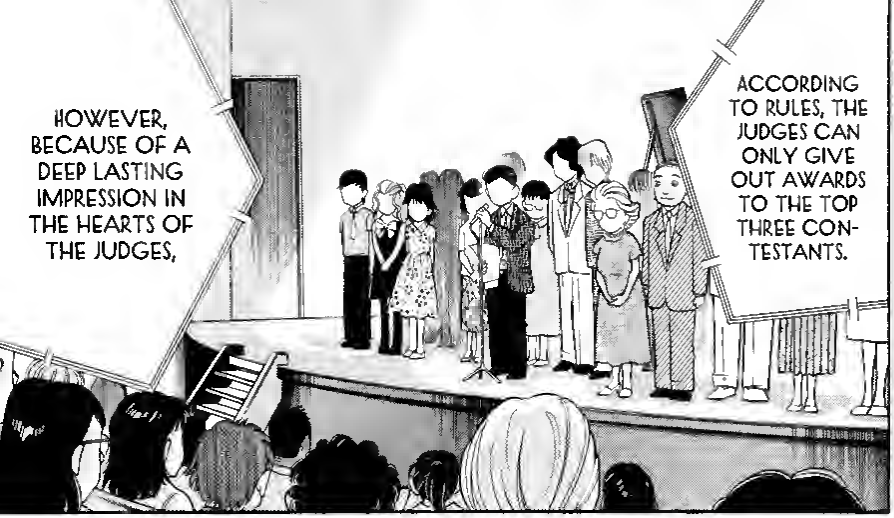

IT WAS A PER-FORMANCE ONLY YOU COULD HAVE GIVEN.
THAT PER-FORMANCE IS SURELY MADE OUT OF THE ESSENCE OF YOUR FRIENDSHIP WITH KAI.

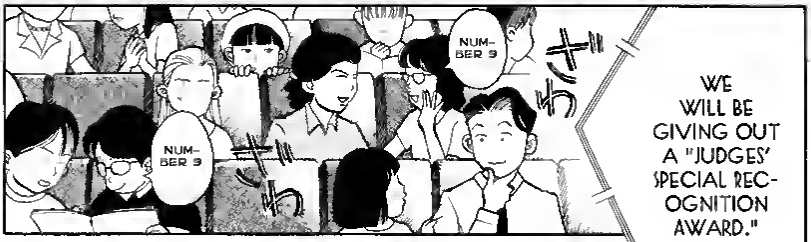


IT WOULD TAKE THE LIKES OF AMAMIYA JUNIOR AN ENTIRE LIFETIME TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO PLAY LIKE THAT
YEAH!

AHAHA, NICELY SAID, SHIRAI-SHI!!
LET'S GO! LET'S GO!
THAT LITTLE BOY COULDN'T EVEN DO IT IF HE HAD THREE LIFE-TIMES!
Father!
NOW, LET'S GIVE THEM ANOTHER PASSIONATE ROUND OF APPLAUSE.
パチパチ
パチパチ
パチパチ

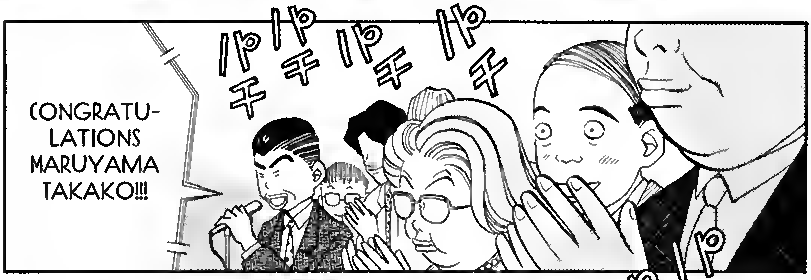
LET'S WISH HIM THE BEST OF LUCK AND A GREAT PERFOR-MANCE NEXT WEEK !!
MISTER AMAMIYA WILL BE REPRESENTING THE CENTRAL REGION SOUTHERN DISTRICT AT THE NATIONAL COMPETITION IN A WEEK'S TIME.
BECAUSE IN THIS WORLD, THERE ARE RULES MEANT TO BE BROKEN AND RULES NOT MEANT TO BE BROKEN, RIGHT?
YEAH.
THAT'S RIGHT.
WELL, HIS PERFECT SCORE IS SOME-THING WE CAN'T CONTEST.
WE HAVE ANOTHER "FIRST EVER" AT THIS YEAR'S COM-PETITION!
UHHH, BEFORE WE START THE AWARDS CEREMONY,

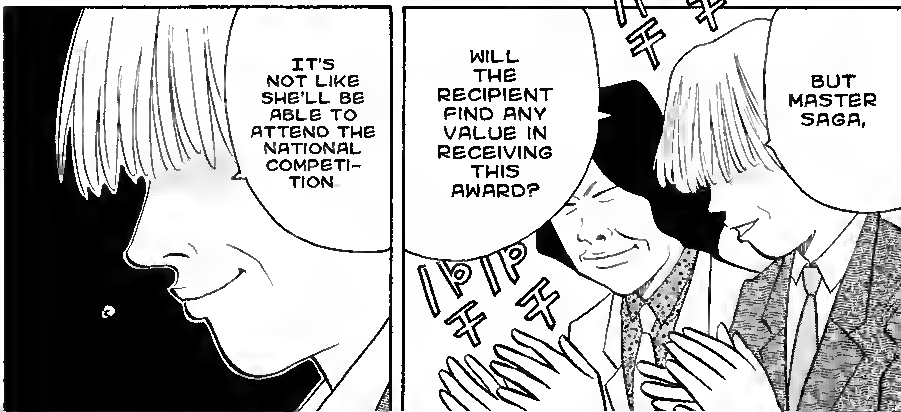

HOWEVER, BECAUSE OF A DEEP LASTING IMPRESSION IN THE HEARTS OF THE JUDGES,
ACCORDING TO RULES, THE JUDGES CAN ONLY GIVE OUT AWARDS TO THE TOP THREE CONTESTANTS.


NUMBER 9
NUMBER 9
WE WILL BE GIVING OUT A "JUDGES' SPECIAL RECOGNITION AWARD."

THE "JUDGES' SPECIAL RECOGNITION AWARD" GOES TO...
THAT'S RIGHT, SHIBA!
AND THIS IS A RULE MEANT TO BE BROKEN
MARUYAMA TAKAKO.

NUMBER 9!!
MISS MARU-YAMA TAKAKO!
パチパチパチパチ
TOLD YOU!
I KNEW IT


CONGRATU-LATIONS MARUYAMA TAKAKO!!!
パパチパチパチ


IT'S NOT LIKE SHE'LL BE ABLE TO ATTEND THE NATIONAL COMPETI-TION
WILL THE RECIPIENT FIND ANY VALUE IN RECEIVING THIS AWARD?
パチパチ
BUT MASTER SAGA,
パパチ

SHE PROBABLY OOESN'T KNOW IT YET, BUT THERE IS GREAT MEANING TO THIS PERFOR-MANCE
THIS ACT IS THE FIRST STEP IN CLEANING OUT THE DUST-COVERED GARBAGE THAT IS THE PIANO WORLO
A KID AIMING FOR THE NATIONAL COMPETITION WOULO NOT HAVE GONE AGAINST THE STANDARD WAY OF PER-FORMING AT THESE FINALS
HOW FOOLISH OF YOU, SHIBA
SHIBA, YOU CAN'T BE THAT DUMB
HIS PIANO WOULO BE LIKE A FRESH BREEZE BLOWING AWAY ALL OF THE OUST, WHY WEREN'T RULES BROKEN THEN?
TH-THEN WHAT ABOUT ICHI-NOSE?
SINCE THEY CAN'T APPRECIATE IT, ALL THEY CAN DO IS BRAND IT AS HERESY
OON'T YOU AGREE THAT HIS PIANO IS SO MAGNIFICENT THAT MOST JUOGES WOULO NOT BE AT A LEVEL TO APPRECIATE IT?

MARU-YAMA TAKAKO, ARE YOU PRESENT?
MISS...?
DON'T MAKE ME SAY IT OUT LOUD!
BASICALLY, THE JUDGES ARE JUST A BUNCH OF BLOCKHEADS THAT CAN'T EVEN BEGIN TO COMPREHEND HIS SKILL!
ARE YOU SOMEWHERE IN THE CONCERT HALL?
WHAT DO WE DO NOW?
THEY MIGHT HAVE
WHAT IF THEY LEFT...?
MAYBE WE'RE NOT BEING CLEAR ENOUGH?
WHAT DO WE DO NOW?

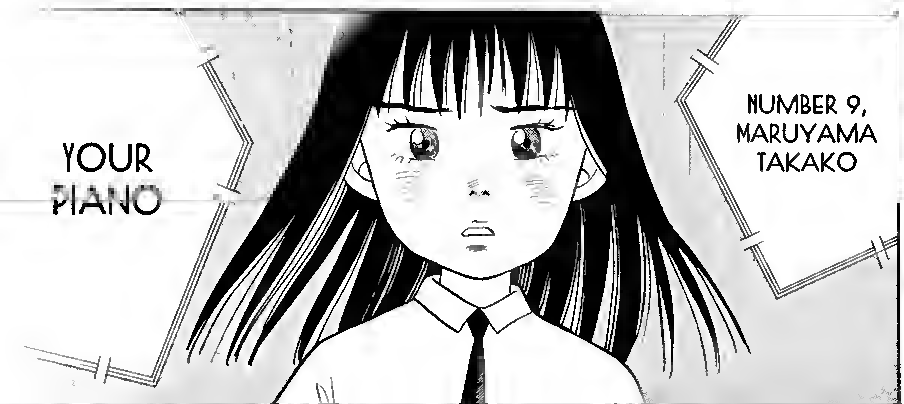
TURN UP THE MIC A BIT.
YES!

NUMBER 9 MARU-YAMA TAKAKO,
YOUR PIANO MADE A STRONG IMPACT ON THE HEARTS OF US JUDGES.

THIS IS UNPREC-EDENTED, BUT WE WOULD LIKE
YOU TO ACCEPT THE "JUDGES' SPECIAL REC-OGNITION AWARD" FROM US.

IF YOU CAN HEAR THIS, PLEASE RETURN TO THE CONCERT HALL.
CONGRAT-ULATIONS!!
ア ア ア
全日本学生ピアノコンクール
中部南地区 本選

I
REPEAT.


YOUR
PIANO
NUMBER 9,
MARUYAMA
TAKAKO

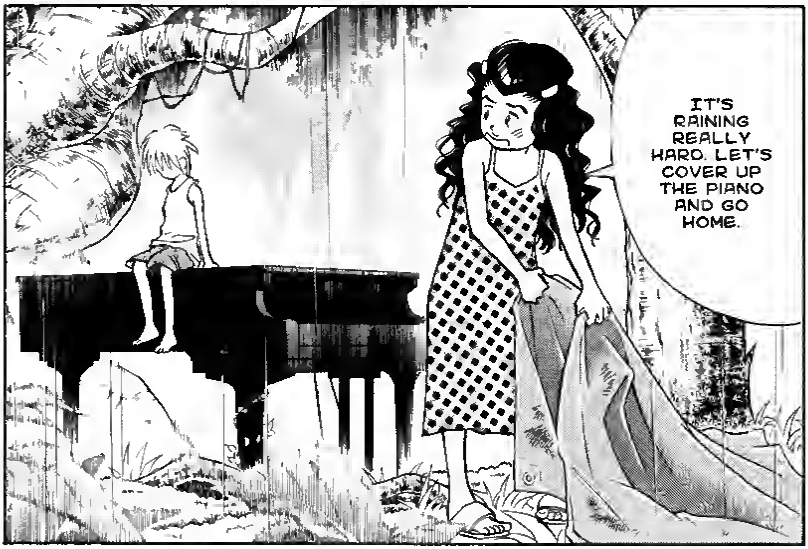
HAS DEEPLY AFFECTED US TO THE BOTTOMS OF OUR HEARTS!!
KA—

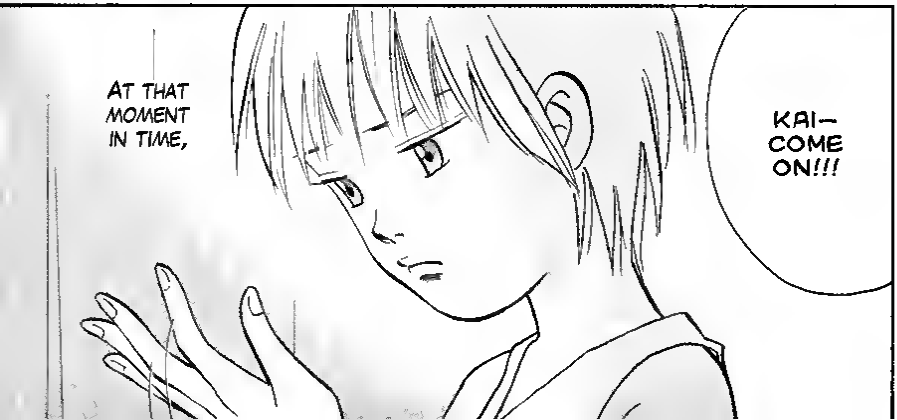
KAI.
WE WOULD LIKE TO PRESENT,
FORGET ABOUT IT LITTLE MISS!! LET'S TOSS A PITY AWARD LIKE THAT RIGHT BACK IN THEIR FACES!
AARGH, SH-SHIRAISHI, WHAT ARE YOU SAYING? NOW YOU'RE JUST GETTING BEL-LIGERENT!
ピアノコンクール
本選
I DID IT, KAI!!

I GOT

A PUNCH IN FOR YOU AT THE FINALS.
くつがえせるものとくつがえせないもの END

KAI—

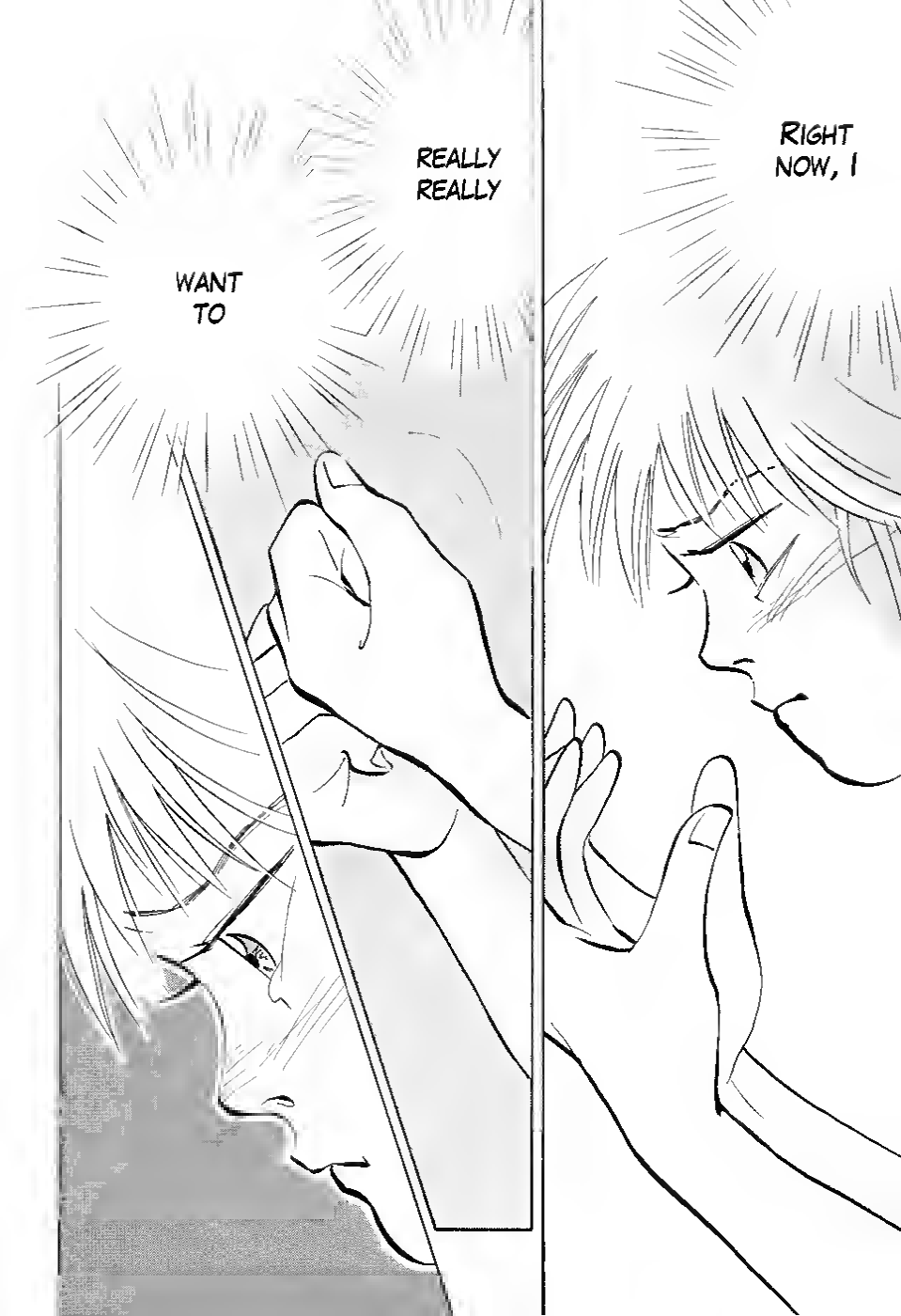

IT'S RAINING REALLY HARD. LET'S COVER UP THE PIANO AND GO HOME.


AT THAT MOMENT IN TIME,
KAI— COME ON!!!

AT THE DISTRICT FINALS OF THE CONCOURS, AMAMIYA SECURED HIS PARTICIPATION IN THE NATIONAL COMPETITION WITH A PERFECT SCORE...

AND TAKAKO RECEIVED THE "JUDGES' SPECIAL APPRECIATION AWARD."

OBVIOUSLY I WASN'T AWARE OF THAT.
I WANT TO
PLAY THE PIANO!!


RIGHT NOW, I
REALLY REALLY
WANT TO

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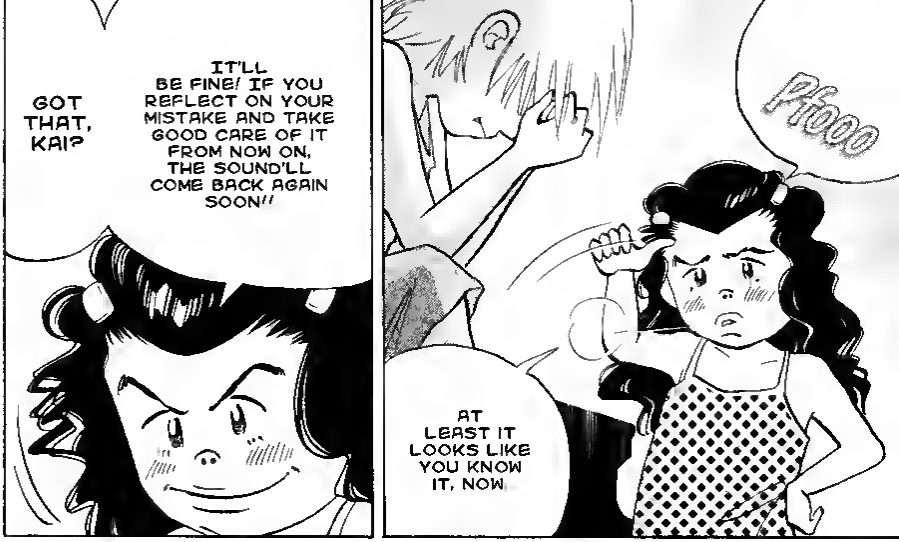
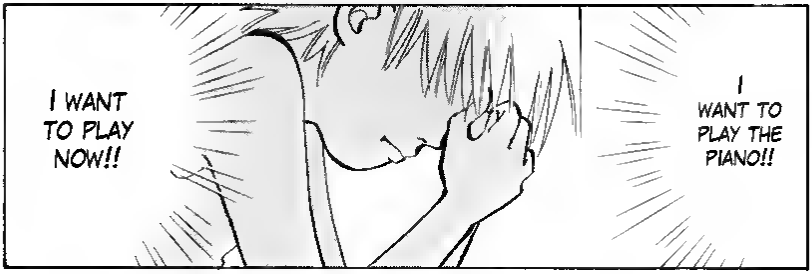
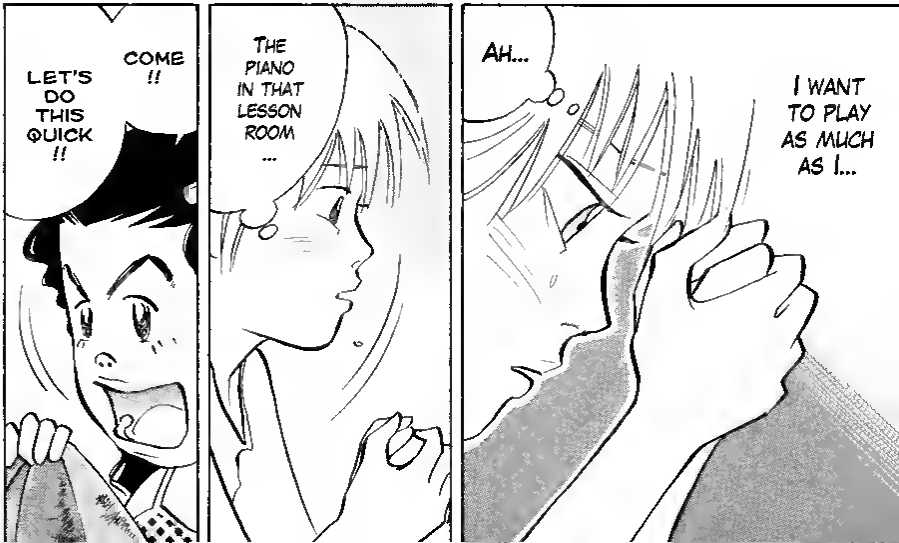
LIGHT-NING!!
WAAAHH!
ARI'S AFRAID !!!
LET'S HURRY UP AND GO HOME!!
KAI!! LIGHT-NING!!
WE HAVE TO PUT THE COVER OVER THE PIANO...
HEY, WHAT ARE YOU DOING, KAI?

THAT'S SNEAKY, KAI!!
OHHH!! I SEE WHAT YOU'RE DOING!!!
I'LL TELL REI!!
ACTING ALL OEPRESSEO SO YOU CAN HAVE ME TAKE CARE OF THE PIANO BY MY-SELF!!
I WARNEO YOU ABOUT IT OVER ANO OVER AND OVER!!!
IT'S BECAUSE YOU HAVEN'T BEEN TAKING GOOO CARE OF THE PIANO THAT IT'S BROKEN NOW!

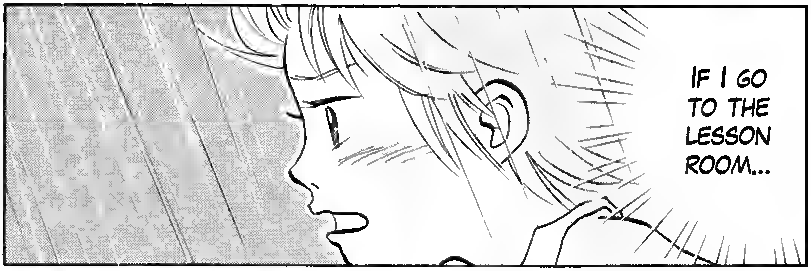

GOT THAT, KAI?
IT'LL BE FINE! IF YOU REFLECT ON YOUR MISTAKE AND TAKE GOOD CARE OF IT FROM NOW ON, THE SOUND'LL COME BACK AGAIN SOON!!
PFOOO
AT LEAST IT LOOKS LIKE YOU KNOW IT, NOW

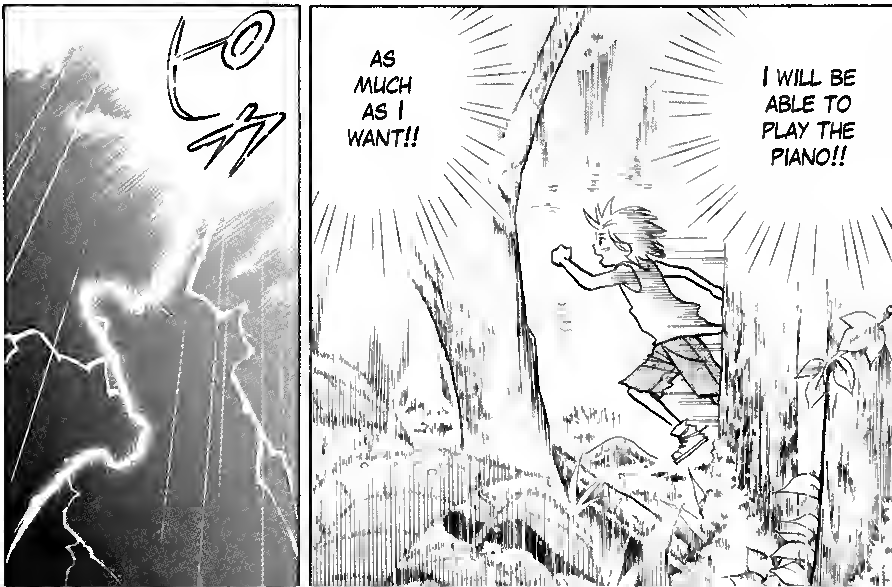

I WANT TO PLAY NOW!!
I WANT TO PLAY THE PIANO!!


LET'S DO THIS QUICK !!
COME !!
THE PIANO IN THAT LESSON ROOM ...
AH...
I WANT TO PLAY AS MUCH AS I...

KAI, WHERE ARE YOU GOING!?
WHAT ABOUT THE PIANO!?
AHH!!
STUPID KAI!!!
YOU'RE SO SNEAKY!! I KNEW IT!! YOU'RE GOING TO LEAVE THE PIANO ALL TO ME!

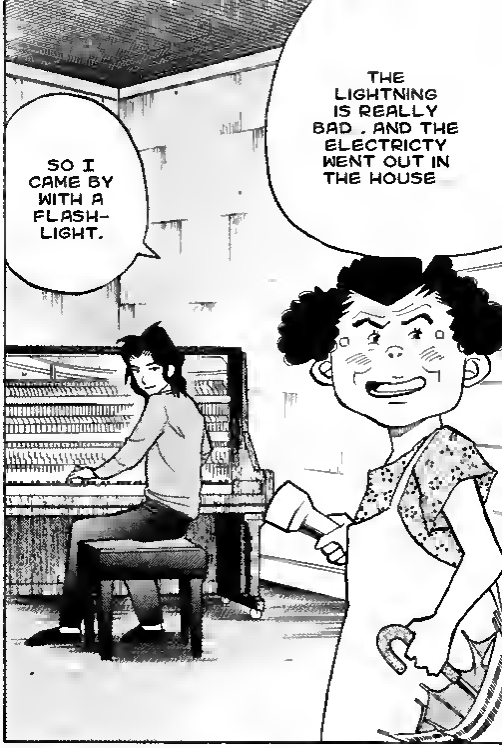
THAT'S IT!!!
EEEK!
crash


IF I GO TO THE LESSON ROOM...

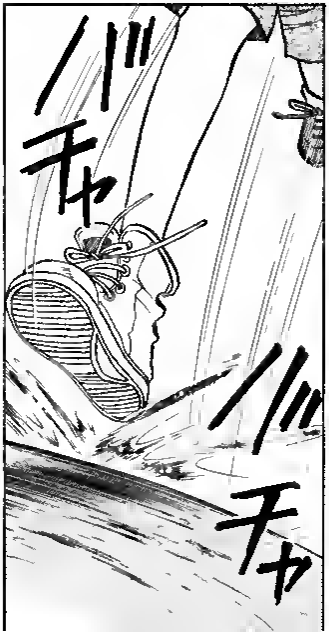

AS MUCH AS I WANT!!
I WILL BE ABLE TO PLAY THE PIANO!!

WOW!
TEACH!!! ARE YOU OK!?
HAHA,
SORT OF.

ANYHOW... THAT KID WON'T BE COMING BY IN THIS POURING RAIN, RIGHT?
THANKS FOR THE CONCERN, BUT I'M JUST ABOUT TO LEAVE


THE LIGHTNING IS REALLY BAD . AND THE ELECTRICTY WENT OUT IN THE HOUSE
SO I CAME BY WITH A FLASH-LIGHT.

ICHI-NOSE, WAS IT?


チャ
チャ

YEAH.

crash
AWAAH!

I CAN ASK HIM TO LET ME PLAY THE PIANO THERE FROM TIME TO TIME.
THERE'S A PIANO IN THE LESSON ROOM.
SILLY ME! WHY DIDN'T I THINK OF IT EARLIER!
Whoooo
BUT MAN, THIS WEATHER ...
ゴロゴロ…
バチャ
バチャ
crash

Yikes!

HUH?
WOW, IT CAME DOWN RIGHT ABOVE US.
THAT WAS HUGE !!
IF WE GOT HIT BY THAT, WE'D BE GONERS
IT IT'S THE "FOREST'S EDGE," THEN I WOULDN'T PARTICU-LARLY CARE
IT WOULDN'T BE THE FACTORY, RIGHT?
HEY STOP THAT! THEN I'D BE OUT OF A JOB TOMORROW!
IT WAS IN THE DIRECTION OF THE "FOREST'S EDGE"
HUH? I THOUGHT IT WAS REALLY REALLY CLOSE-BY

THAT ONE REALLY CAME OOWN!!
CREAK
IT DIDN'T LAND ON THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, DID IT?
ZZZZ

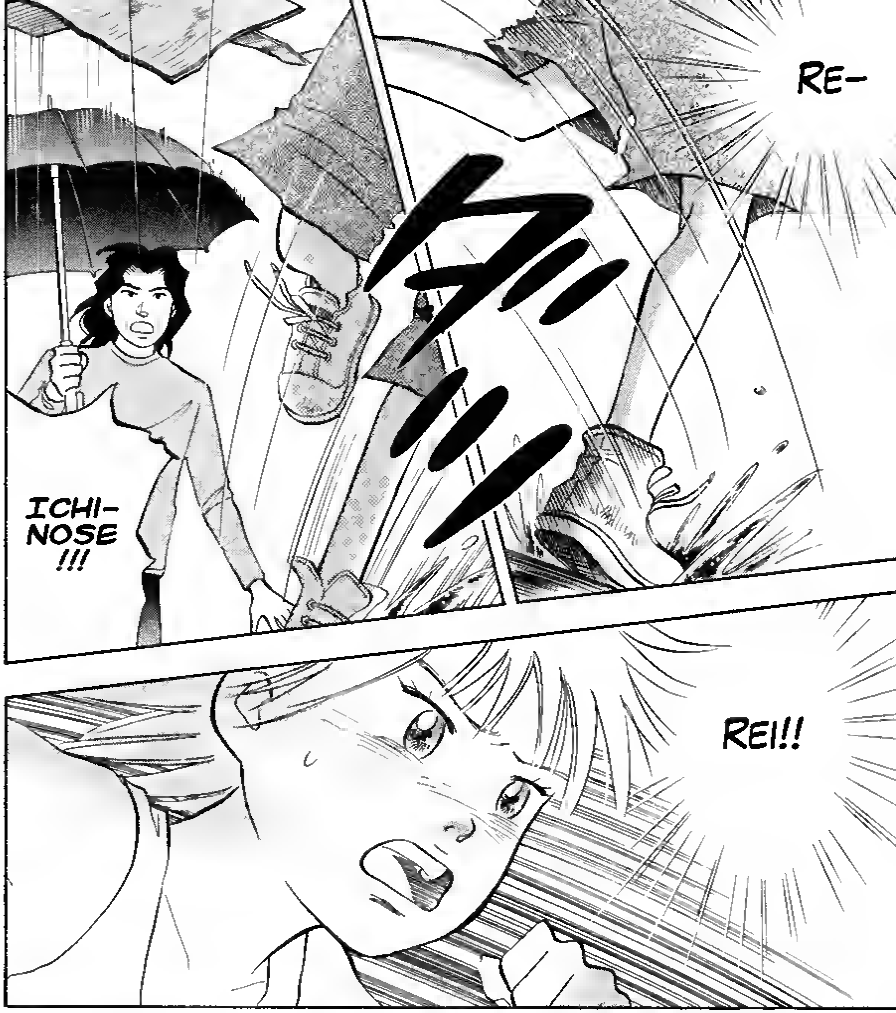
AH.

YEAH
IF THAT WERE TO HAPPEN, YOU'D BE OUT OF A JOB TOMORROW, TEACH!

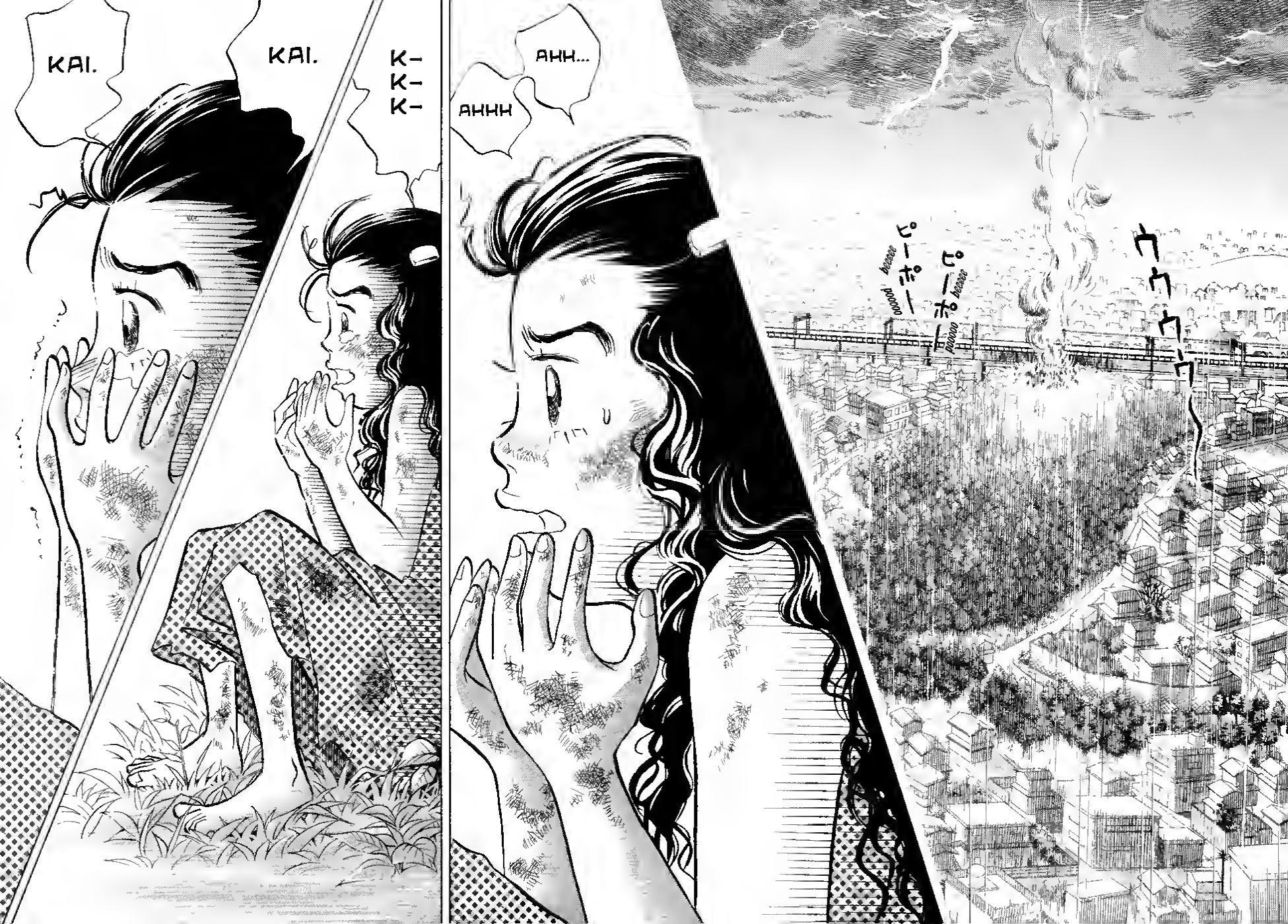
I-

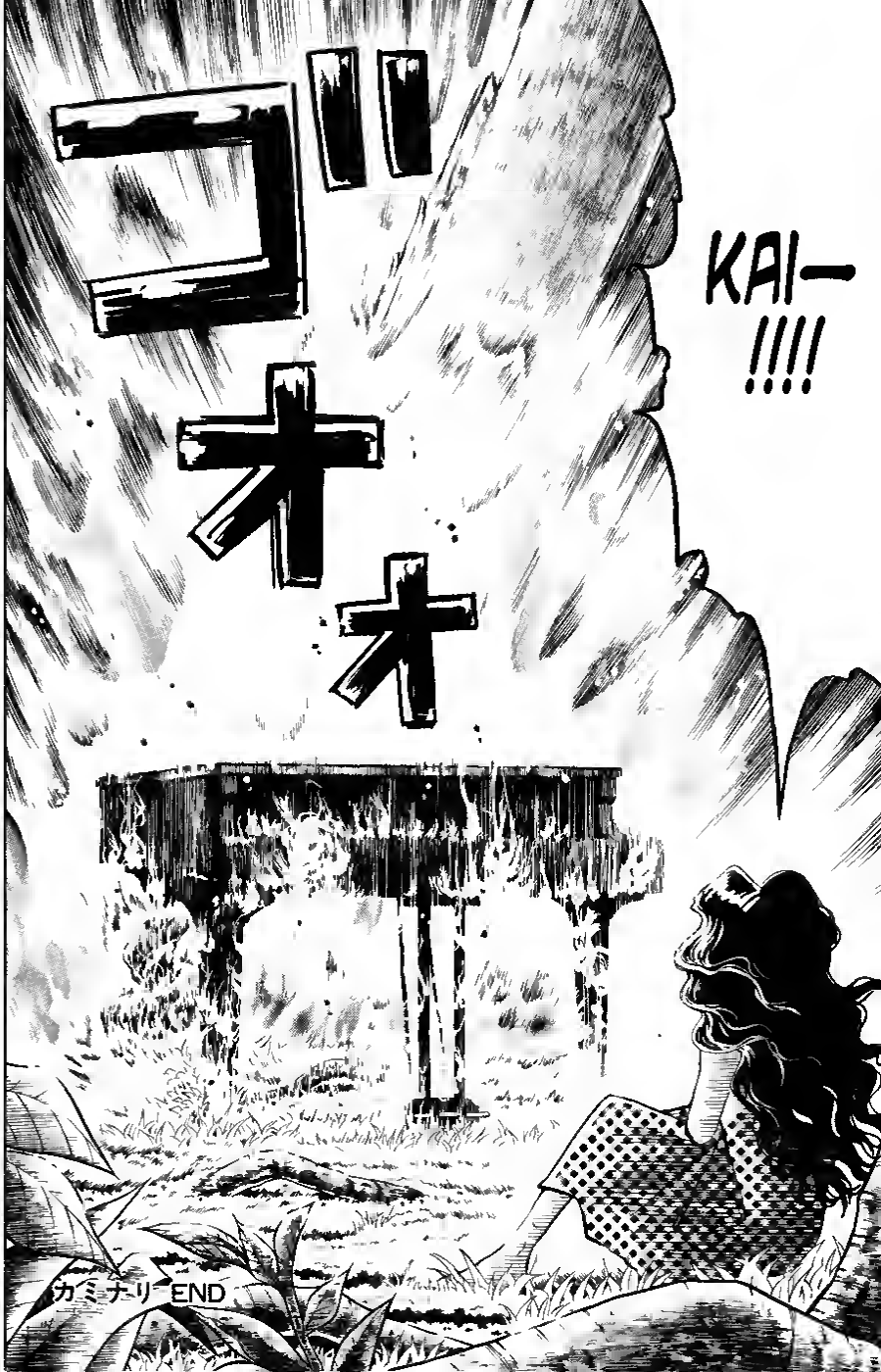
ICHI-
NOSE!!!
HEY! THE LIGHT-NING DIDN'T HIT THE FACTORY !!
REALLY? THEN— THEN WHAT ABOUT MORIWAKI ELEMEN-TARY!?
NO, NO!!! IT WASN'T THE ELEMEN-TARY SCHOOL EITHER !!

LIGHTNING HIT THE "FOREST'S EDGE!!!"
I GOT REALLY SCARED THERE, THINKING "I MIGHT'VE BEEN THE FACTORY !!!
YEE-HAAA!! I'M SAVED.
"FOREST'S EDGE!?"
IT WAS THE "FOREST'S EDGE!!!"
THE LIGHTNING STRUCK THE "FOREST'S EDGE!!"
AH!!!


RE-
ICHI-
NOSE
!!!
REI!!

ICHI-
NOSE
!!!
REI!!!


KAI.
KAI.
K-
K-
K-
AHHH
AHH...
ピーポー
ピーポー
ピーポー


KAI—
!!!!
カミナリ END

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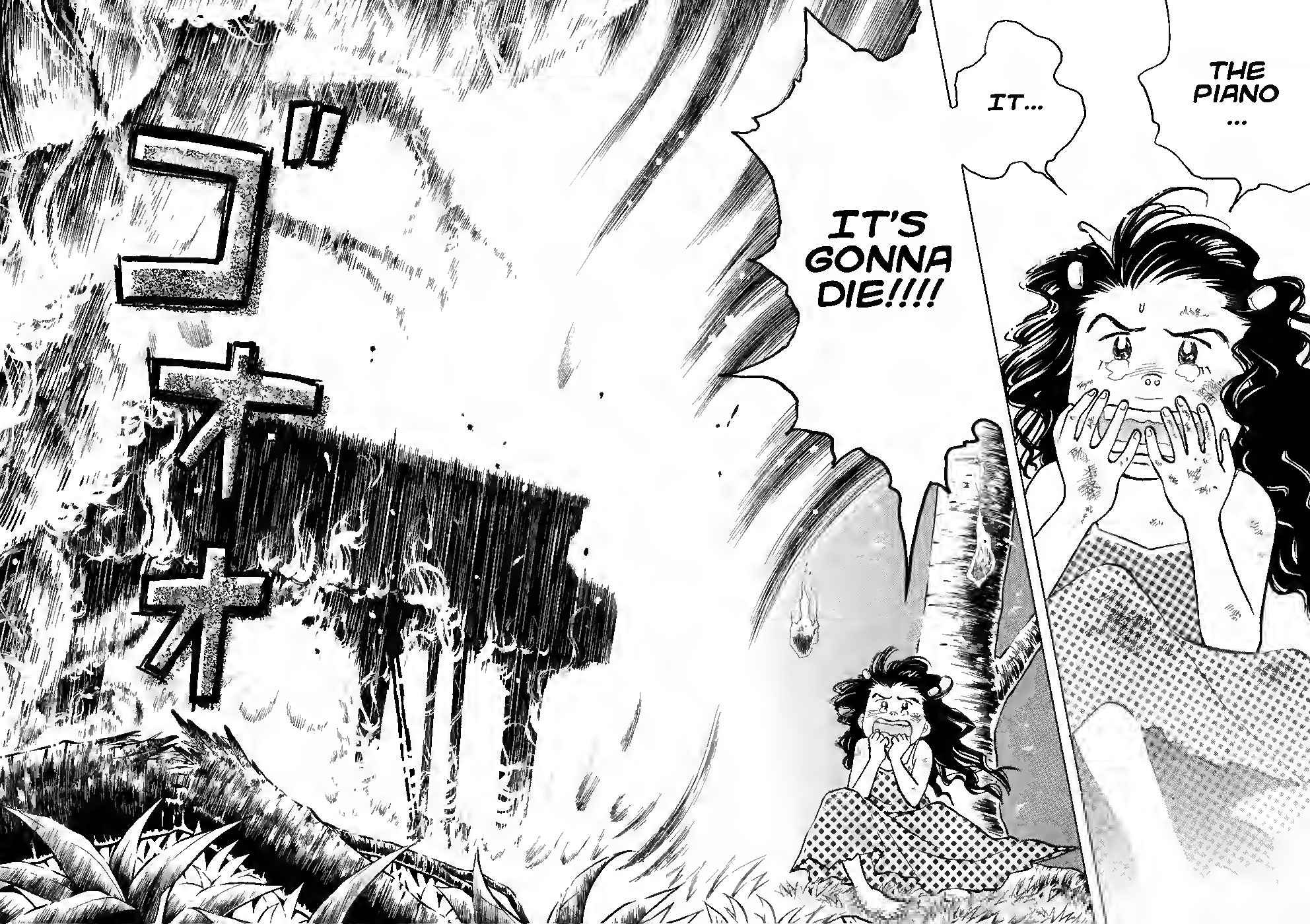
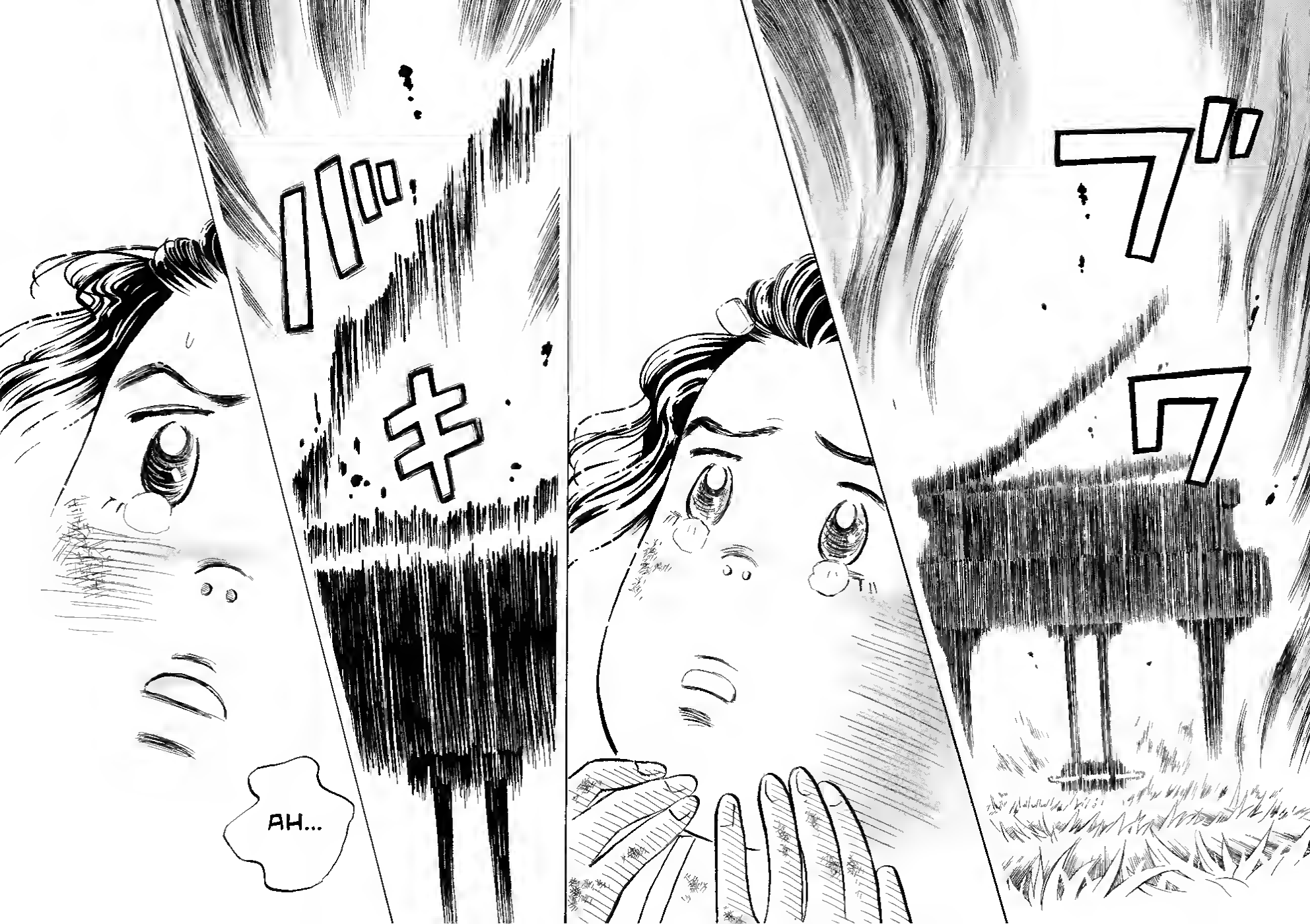
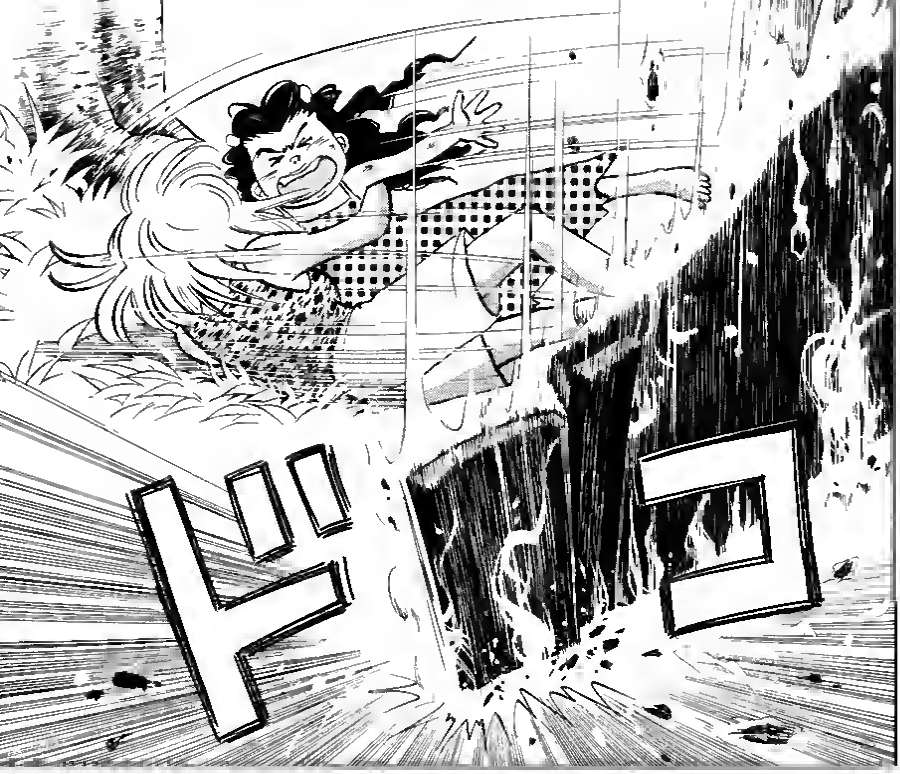

ゴオオ
IT'S GONNA DIE!!!!
IT...
THE PIANO ...


AH...

AHHHH, NO!!!
I'M GONNA DIE, TOO!!!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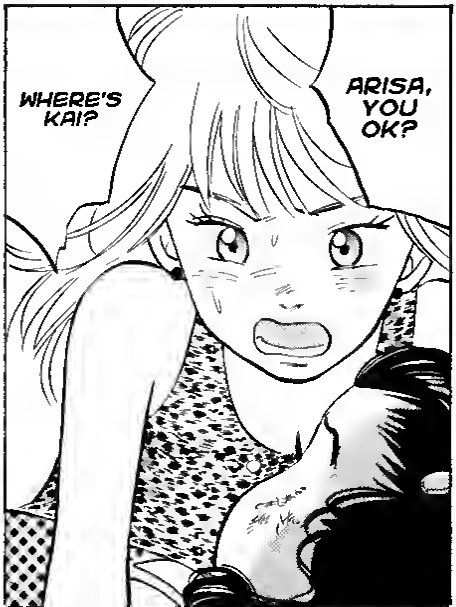

WHERE'S KAI?
ARISA, YOU OK?

AH!
REI!

ARISA IS OK...
BUT KAI ISN'T HERE.
OKAY. LET'S GET OUT OF HERE FOR NOW.
CAN YOU STAND UP?
B- BUT IF WE DON'T SAVE THE PIANO
IT'LL DIE.

LET IT GO, ARISA.
IT'S ALREADY TOO LATE.
IT-
KAI!!!

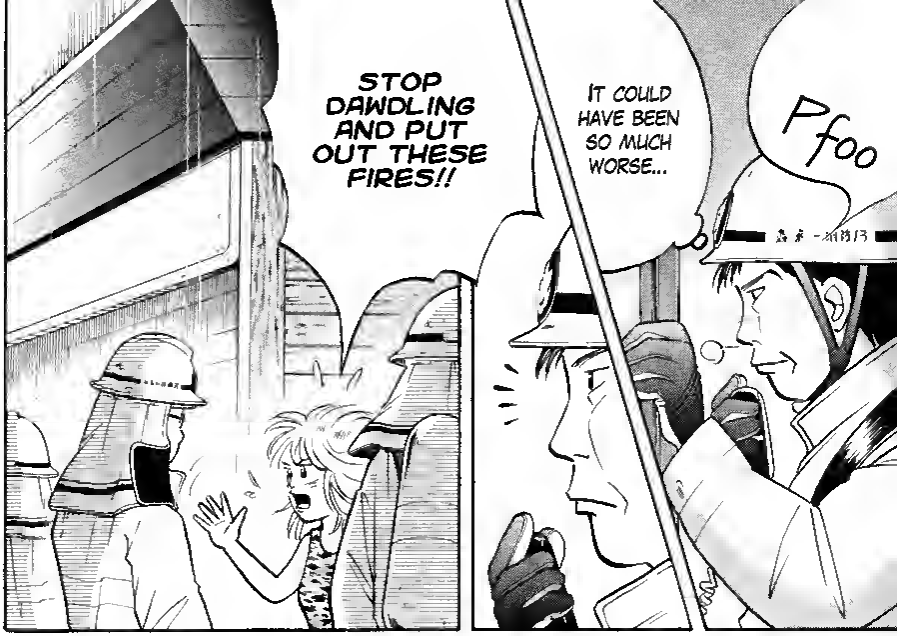
WATCH OUT REI!!
crash
crack
WAAAH !!

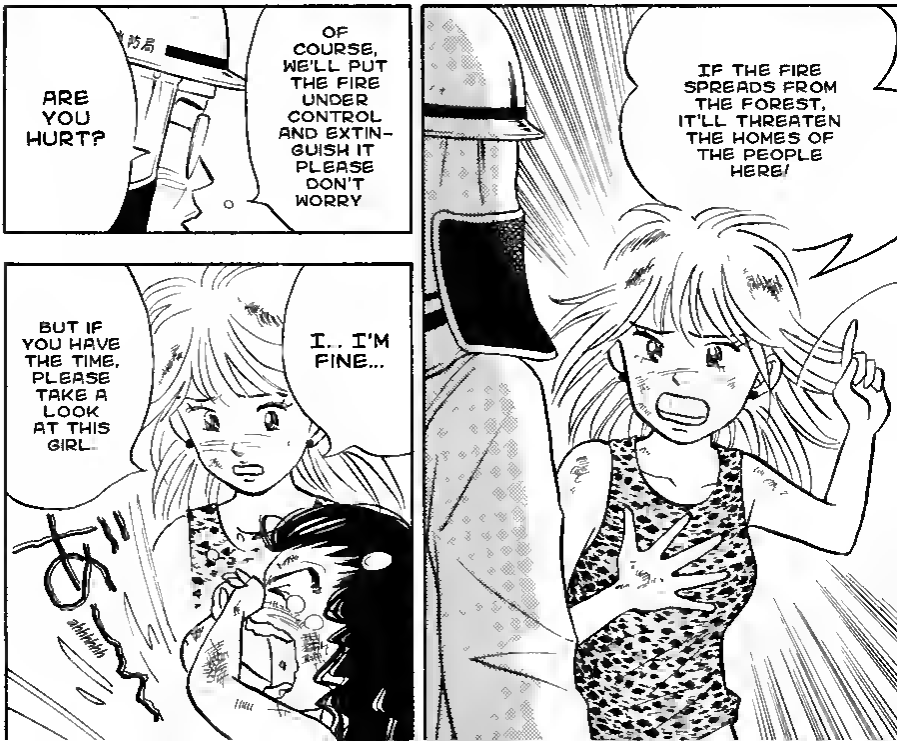
チカ
IT STRUCK THE "FOREST'S EDGE!"
THAT LAST LIGHT-NING STRIKE WAS HUGE!
I HAVE A BAD FEELING ABOUT THIS.
REI !!!

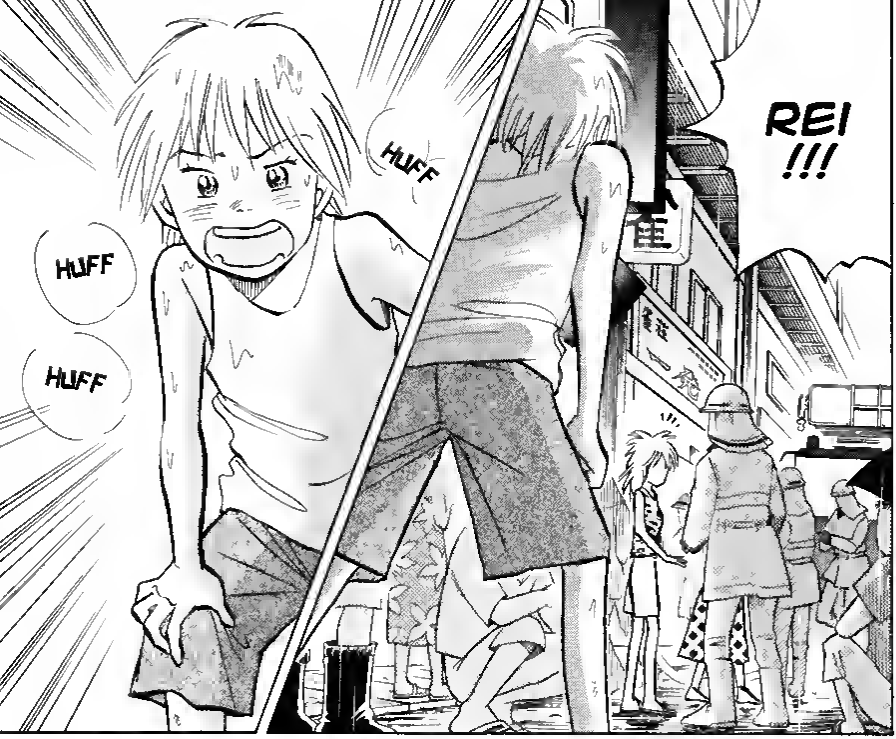
ICHI-NOSE !!
PLEASE LET REI BE SAFE AND SOUND!!
TEACH!
TEACH!
AHH, RIGHT. ICHINOSE'S HOUSE IS AT THE "FOREST'S EDGE"...
USE THIS !!
YOU'RE NOT GOING TO MATCH A KID'S PACE LIKE THAT!

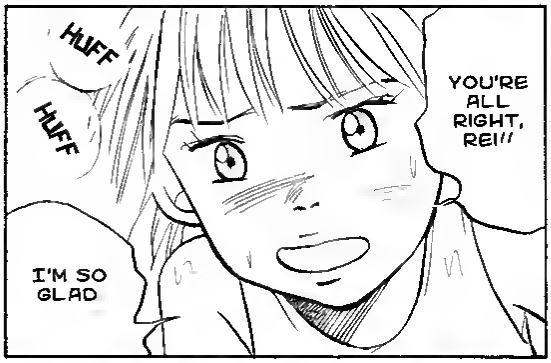
THE LIGHTNING STRUCK AT THE "FOREST'S EDGE"
ゴオオ
ピーポーピーポー
ウウウウ
IT APPEARS TO HAVE DIRECTLY HIT THE TREES OF THE FOREST NEAR THE TRAIN TRACKS.

FROM HERE, WE WILL BE APPROACHING THE SITE BY THE STREET COMMONLY KNOWN AS "SEDUCTION STREET!"
CURRENTLY, WE DO NOT SEE ANYONE INJURED OR HURT AMONG THE RESIDENTS NOR THE PATRONS,
AND BECAUSE THERE IS A WIDE AREA BETWEEN THE FIRE AND THE HOUSING, I DON'T BELIEVE THERE WILL BE ANYTHING SERIOUS TO WORRY ABOUT—


STOP DAWDLING AND PUT OUT THESE FIRES!!
IT COULD HAVE BEEN SO MUCH WORSE...
Pfoo

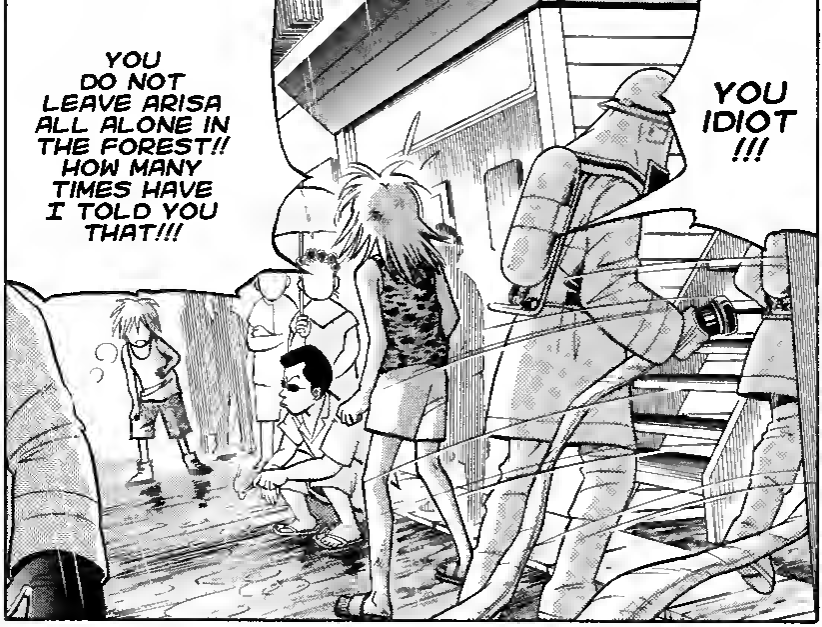

ARE YOU HURT?
OF COURSE, WE'LL PUT THE FIRE UNDER CONTROL AND EXTINGUISH IT PLEASE DON'T WORRY
IF THE FIRE SPREADS FROM THE FOREST, IT'LL THREATEN THE HOMES OF THE PEOPLE HERE!
I.. I'M FINE...
BUT IF YOU HAVE THE TIME, PLEASE TAKE A LOOK AT THIS GIRL.
Ahhhhh


REI !!!
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF

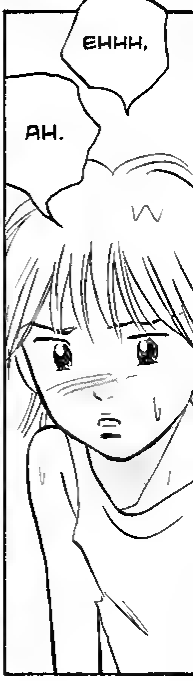

HUFF
HUFF
YOU'RE ALL RIGHT, REI!!
I'M SO GLAD

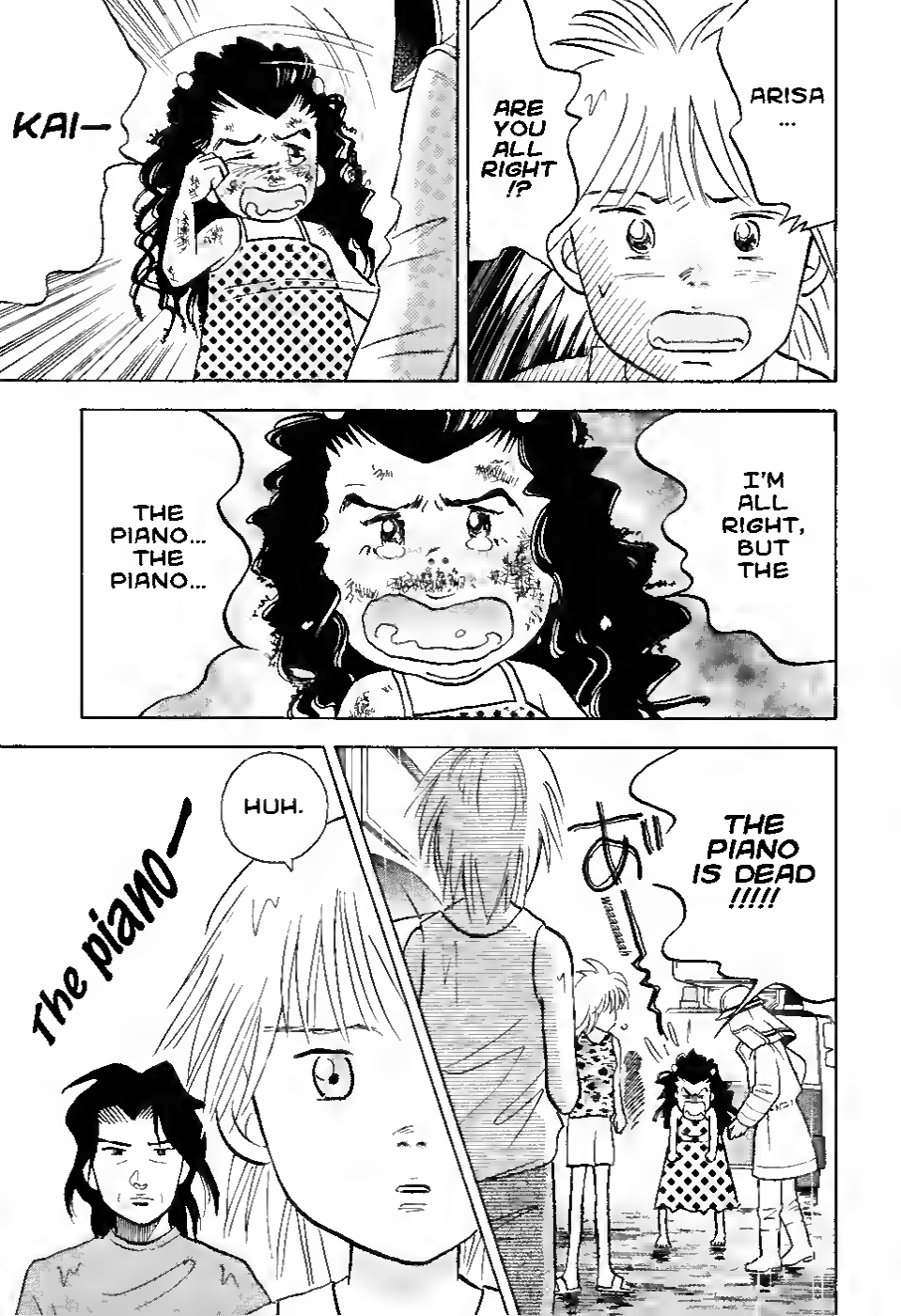
KAI!

WHEN I SAW THE FOREST BURNING FROM FAR AWAY, I THOUGHT ...

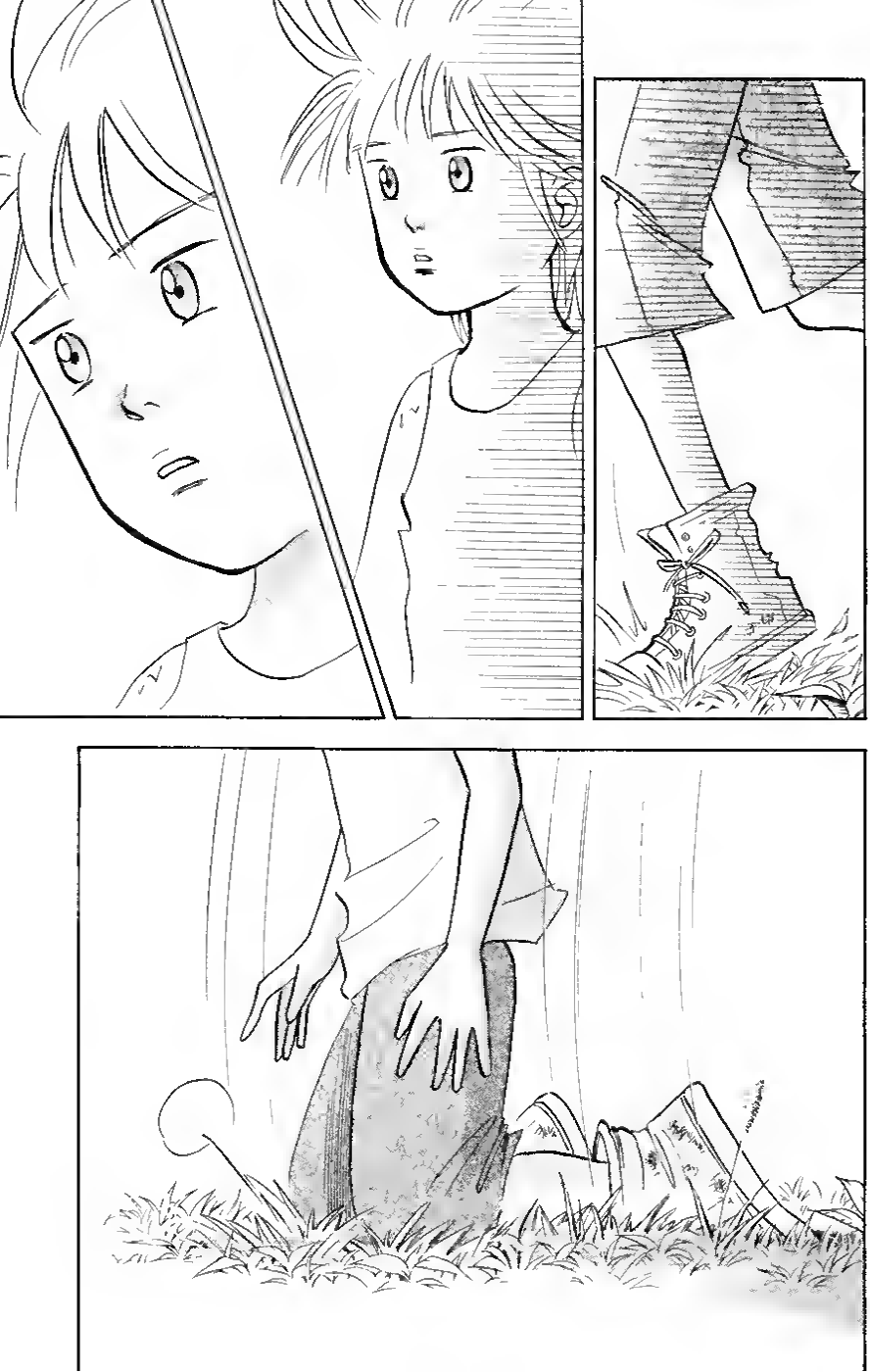

YOU DO NOT LEAVE ARISA ALL ALONE IN THE FOREST!! HOW MANY TIMES HAVE I TOLD YOU THAT!!!
YOU IDIOT !!!

ARISA, WHAT'S WRONG?

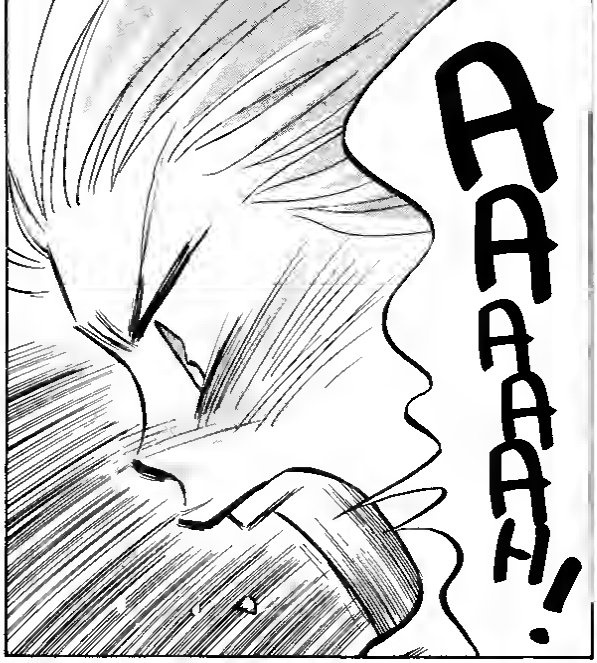

EHHH,
AH.


KAI—
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT!?
ARISA...
I'M ALL RIGHT, BUT THE
THE PIANO... THE PIANO...
THE PIANO IS DEAD!!!!!
Waaaaaaah
HUH.
The piano—

The piano got killed by the light-ning —



AHH...
AHH...
AHH...
AHH...
AHH...



カミナリ② END

The Perfect World of KAI

To be continued in Volume 7

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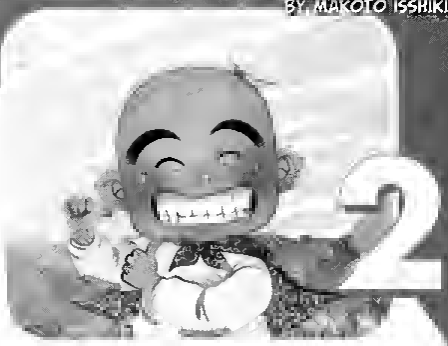

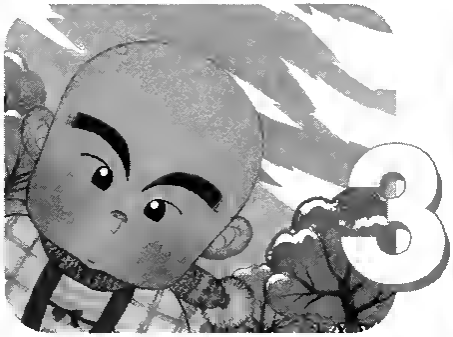

大絶賛発売中!!

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